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ABSTRACT

The focus of this book is on enabling parents, teachers and other caregivers to develop home-school situations where children and adults can learn and grow in positive ways. Chapter One includes a discussion of how parents and teachers learn from each other. In addition, the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of children are examined. The importance of establishing a curriculum early in the life of the child is explicated in Chapter Two. The way children learn as a result of home environments and the benefit of home-school communications is also explored. Special consideration is given to helping children develop positive behaviors early in life and also on involving them and their caregivers in better utilizing human and material resources. Chapters Three and Four discuss the basic roles of parents and teachers and how these roles effect the home-school relationship. Changes in the parenting process and in the teaching process are examined. Chapter Five contains an explication of the major goals parent-teacher groups need to attend to. In Chapter Six a family-school systems approach to the teaching-learning process is described. Finally, an appendix is included which enables the reader to review ideas about parent involvement. (Author/MP)

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building successful parent-teacher partnerships

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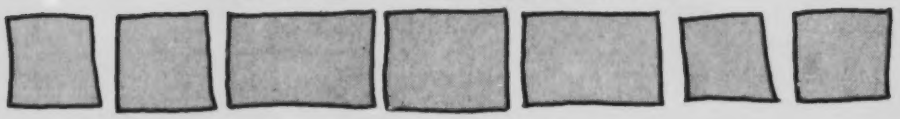

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introduction

The importance of the home-school relationship has been recognized by many educators. Indications are that when parents and teachers form a working relationship early, children and adults benefit. The focus of this book is on enabling parents, teachers and other caregivers to develop home-school situations where children and adults can learn and grow in positive ways. Chapter One includes a discussion of how parents and teachers learn from each other. In addition, the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of children are examined in relationship to parent-teacher roles and activities.

The importance of establishing a curriculum early in the life of the child is explicated in Chapter Two. The way children learn as a result of home environments and the benefit of home-school communications is also explored. Special consideration is given to helping children develop positive behaviors early in life and also on involving them and their caregivers in better utilizing human and material resources. Chapters Three and Four are devoted to discussing the basic roles of parents and teachers and how these roles effect the home-school relationship. Changes in the parenting process and in the teaching process are examined as they related to developing productive parent involvement programs.

Chapter Five contains an explication of the major goals parent-teacher groups need to attend to. The importance of creating productive learning settings, improving parent and teacher self concepts and establishing effective communications systems are a few of the goals examined. In Chapter Six a family-school systems approach to the teaching-learning process is described. This chapter provides a synthesis of the organizational concerns parents and teachers need to be aware of as they plan programs. Finally, an appendix is included which enables the reader to review their ideas about parent involvement.

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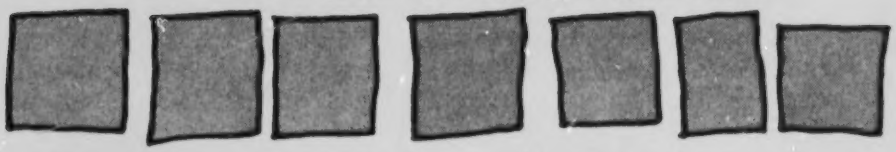
chapter one

parent involvement: a learning approach



The need for a strong family-school relationship has never been greater in our society. The problems existent in families and schools are solvable when parents and teachers work together as a team. Home environments in need of repair such as the child abuse-neglect home, economically deprived family, and the family under stress are indicative of the need for meaningful parent involvement. Similarly, the financial, social and related problems faced by schools are evidence that a new approach to home-school-community relationships is needed.

The traditional concept of involving parents in the process of educating their children has typically been restricted to one way communication approaches. Either the parent is talking at the teacher or the teacher is talking at the parent. Yet the real purpose of parental involvement in the educational process is to foster an improved learning climate and support system for the child. Parent-teacher confrontation models do little to foster the development of environments conducive to effective interaction and learning for the child.

Indeed a much broader view (than has been used in the past) of parent involvement in the school is needed. Parents and teachers must come to realize that their behaviors are much more important than their words in effecting the child's self concept. When parents and teachers work in complementary, supportive type roles, (as partners in the development of learning climates and support systems for young children) not only are they learning – but they are a vital part of the educational process.

The concept of 'parental involvement' (as put forth throughout this book) is clearly reflective of a partnership agreement between the teacher, child, parent, and community working and learning together as a team. This concept is built upon the belief that the parent is the first and most important influence in the child's development. It holds that the parent, like all other teachers, must first be

a growing, compassionate person in order to be an effective parent.

Further, vital to this concept is the belief that the parents' goals for their children are similar to the ones held by the teacher and the school. This common set of goals should become the starting place of a cooperative relationship.

The roles of parenting, like the roles of teaching are, however, diverse and always in need of renewal, enrichment, and growth. Being a competent parent is indeed a skill building process. Current emphasis on the parent as an involved person in the schooling process is a useful perspective if the focus is on the parent as a member of the teaching-learning team.

When teachers and/or parents perform their roles in narrowly perceived, isolated ways the involvement concept is not being fulfilled. The focus of the educational process must be on the young child, with parents and teachers in joint support as facilitators and models – setting and maintaining the stage for learning. Parents and teachers become stronger, more insightful individuals when they participate in joint determination of the educational program in which their children have optimal conditions necessary for growth toward becoming functional and developing persons.

Parents can provide teachers with personal information about the characteristics, habits, learning styles, and behaviors of their children. In turn, parents can learn from teachers another 'view' of how their children relate to other people and how their children are making progress in the acquisition of the necessary literacy and life skills.

Likewise teachers can teach parents new ways of helping their children accomplish educational tasks and suggest appropriate ways of supporting their children in solving developmental and/or social problems that emerge as a normal part of the growing-up process. Teachers can learn from parents the unique qualities and special talents and attributes of their children. Thus, in the authentic sense of parent-teacher involvement, parents and teachers can teach and learn from each other.

In this same perspective, parents and teachers can learn from children. They can learn to value openness and experience the feeling of trust and strength that evolves from such a relationship. They can provide directions in which children can develop empathy for the problems involved in becoming a useful individual and the need for being sensitive yet capable of meeting the diverse needs of others.

The parent-teacher partnership involves a mutual teaching-learning process in which growth in all the following areas of human development is fostered through the construction of a viable educational climate.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD. Parents and teachers must work together to promote the healthful development of children. This effort should begin in the preschool years through teacher contacts with community agencies and other groups who work to provide parents with information on proper diets

and assistance in handling the physical care of the young infant. Such activity should be continued throughout the life of the child with continuous emphasis upon prevention of physical disabilities in the child. In this same perspective it is imperative that parents and teacher communicate continuously about possible physical problems the child is undergoing and formulate approaches to solving these problems. The proper physical development of the child is dependent upon the type of physical activity in which the young child is involved. Parents and teachers through their mutual involvement with children should provide a planned sequence of physical exercises appropriate to the developmental stages and individual characteristics of the children.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD. Parents are involved in the social development of the child throughout life. Yet it is during the infant and early childhood years that parents, through their emotional support of the child, assist the child in developing a constructive self-social system. This type of parental involvement in the socio-educational development of the child is often overlooked as a major form of assistance parents give to the school and the society.

Parents who nurture the child so that he develops a positive self concept and a set of positive social behaviors (so the child can participate effectively in the school setting) have made a major contribution to the school. Likewise, teachers who provide a learning climate of acceptance for young children have taken a step toward constructing the needed bonds of trust between themselves and the parents for a productive parent-teacher involvement program.

As the child develops and emerges through later childhood and adolescence parents and teachers need to continue their involvement through guiding and supporting the young learners productive social habits. When parents model constructive problem solving behaviors for their children and provide realistic limits of behavior for them they are fullfilling an important (but not often observable) involvement function. In the same respect teachers contribute to the social development of the child by providing a learning setting in which children can participate in social activities that promote the development of a sound self-social system.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD. The child of today is 'growing up' in a constantly changing world. The massive changes in the technological and social environment in which the child develops necessarily involves parents and teachers in special efforts to attend to the emotional life of the child.

Parents, by providing emotional guidance (structure, a daily schedule appropriate to the child's stage of development), emotional support (love, attention, and a concern about the child's interests), and a healthy emotional model of behavior for the child can establish the basis for promoting positive mental health in the child. A home environment in which the child can depend on hot meals, regular verbal interaction with his/her parents, and a somewhat orderly

schedule each day is likely to produce a child and young adult who is mentally stable.

The teacher (and auxiliary professional staff) confronts a difficult but not unreachable challenge of facilitating and/or initiating the development of positive mental health behaviors among the children in their classrooms. To the child who has experienced a constructive emotional life in the home the teacher will be viewed as a source of continued emotional development. To the child who has experienced a negative or chaotic emotional life at home the teacher will be viewed with a sense of mystery, possibly distrust, and certainly a hope that something better exists in school than so exists in the home.

The teacher who allows for the time and activities in which children become involved in exploring their affective life contributes positively to the emotional development of the child. An orderly, diverse, and personalized instructional setting (as designed by the teacher) can provide all children with a place where constructive emotional behavior is possible. Parents and teachers working together to build relationships and environments where children find meaning and order to their lives are fulfilling the real meaning of the phrase: *Parent-Teacher Involvement*.

The teacher who acknowledges the idea that the prime responsibility for the child lies with the parents and that parents want to do what is best for their child are able to reach out to parents, and welcome them as valued associates. She also provides an atmosphere of encouragement for the parent to develop their own attitudes; hence, gain their trust.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD. The most effective parent-teacher involvement role utilized in enhancing the child's cognitive development is where parent and teacher participate with the child in the teaching-learning process from infancy through adulthood. A prime role parents play in providing and sustaining developmental gains of their children is the attitude they convey to the children about life. The parent who involves the child in exploratory activities and encourages the curiosity shown by the child is indeed 'readying' that child for a successful school experience.

Parents and teachers who cooperatively establish settings in which the young child can handle concrete materials and explore new events in an enjoyable manner are providing a basis for the successful intellectual development of that child. When parents and teachers teach and learn from each other they provide the best model for children to internalize in their cognitive growth and development.

Parent involvement is indeed an educational process in which parents, teachers, and children learn from each other in a mutually rewarding manner. The concept of parent involvement, as it is explored and detailed throughout this book, is considered to be the means by which all members of the learning team strive to enhance each other through positive home-school experiences.

Discussion Questions

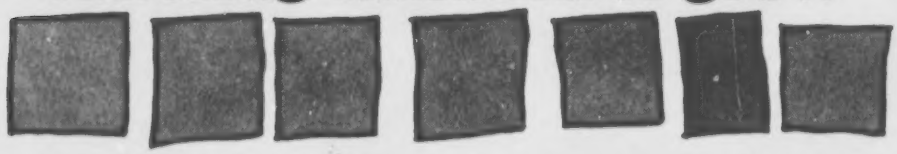
1. Too often, in the past, parent-teacher communications have been of a rather formalistic manner in which the teacher talks and the parent listens. What are your thoughts on the ways in which parents and teachers should communicate with each other?
2. Having read this chapter what are some additional ways in which parent involvement can be made a truly educational endeavor for all members of the learning team?

Suggested Readings

1. Patricia Markun, *Parenting*. Washington, DC: Association for Childhood Education International, 1973.
2. Edward J. Kelley, *Parent-Teacher Interaction*. Seattle, Washington: Special Child Publication, 1974.
3. Donald Eichorn, "The School As A Center of Human Development," *Educational Leadership*. November, 1971.
4. Kevin J. Swick & R. Eleanor Duff, *The Parent-Teacher Bond: Relating, Responding, Rewarding*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishers, 1978.

chapter two

parents and teachers: enabling children to grow



The recognition that learning experiences begin in infancy is gaining credence among more people each year. Educators and parents are beginning to work together in organizing a meaningful 'curriculum' for young children. Child development researchers have added to the insights people can use in organizing effective environments for young children. The concepts of a curriculum for infants, toddlers and young children, although relatively new, is emerging as a significant part of the effort to involve children in a more sequential and orderly set of learning experiences. The basis for any effective parent involvement program must begin before the birth of the child and extend throughout the childhood years.

CURRICULUM BUILDING BEGINS EARLIER THAN WE THINK!

Most parents-to-be accept the idea that human development begins at least during the gestation period. Recent work in the field of human development, however, indicates that how we live, what we eat and our general patterns of functioning influence the future lives of children. Thus an essential ingredient of any effort to improve the lives of children must begin with the habits of future parents. School or community health programs designed to improve the lives of young adults will have a significant impact on the health of future generations. Our values and modes of behavior are usually consonant with the way we hope our children will live. The way we behave sets the stage for a curriculum we impose (consciously or not) on the newborn. Parent education efforts that focus on helping adolescents and young children form positive behaviors will have a long term effect on the kind of parents they will eventually become. This also holds true for those non-parents who eventually join child care professions or community service roles.

PREGNANCY AND THE GRAND DESIGN

The realization that "I" am pregnant brings reactions from delight to depression. The initial attitude toward the possibility of having a child is itself influential in the way one approaches raising a young child. The way a person treats their body, the kinds of mental, nutritional, and health habits they have directly influence the status of the newborn. Research findings related to this aspect of human development indicate that excessive use of drugs, poor nutritional habits, extreme mental stress, and other 'abnormal' states of behavior among pregnant women increase the risk of birth defects as well as decrease the chances of healthy development of the newborn.

Pregnant mothers who practice sound health habits, eat nutritious foods, view pregnancy as an enjoyable experience, and receive proper medical attention generally have healthy babies. In a very real sense the grand design of a meaningful life for children is initiated well in advance of their arrival. What happens in the home-to-be (among fathers and mothers) not only establishes a framework for being born but also sets the stage for how the child will be treated upon arrival.

A CONSTITUTION FOR INFANTS

"We solemnly swear to protect, hold, and nurture our child to the very best of our abilities." If every parent-to-be was asked to *think* of the above statement, a humane set of parenting behaviors would be more a reality than a dream. The continuous increase in child abuse cases in our culture is evidence enough to warrant parent educators to ingrain in people an appreciation for safeguarding the infant from injury or abuse. Knowing how to handle the baby, prepare his room, and organize a meaningful day of activities are key parenting behaviors. *A safe environment* is a place where infants can explore without danger and live without fear of excessive noise, unsanitary conditions or abusive parents, siblings or peers. Environments in which infants have access to poisons, are left to crawl toward open windows, or exist in rat infested care centers are situations that create fearful and abused children.

For those who treasure human life the safety facet of the curriculum is evident. Security is the base and love is the beginning of human growth. To be held, cuddled, and loved is a basic *right* of all infants. Researchers have found that children who lack this essential ingredient in their lives are handicapped in their later attempts to function. Taking time to massage the infants body, holding him gently during feedings, and playing with him at bath times are just a few curriculum basics for parents and child care workers who truly have the interests of children as their priority in life.

Love is more than holdings, it is more encompassing—nurturance. Making sure infants are properly nourished, regularly cleansed, receive plenty of rest,

have adequate opportunities to crawl, move things in unison, communicate with others and are cared for during illness as well as protected from devastating diseases are some ways parents and others nurture infants. Technical engineers spend millions of dollars building a highway curriculum. With the application of the same finances and zeal to the formation of a community centered curriculum for infants the safety, mental security, and intellectual competence of future generations can match the pride many people now take in their highways.

THROUGH THE EYES OF A TODDLER: A NEW DAY IS POSSIBLE!

Toddlers love to explore, experience their growth in visible ways, and to see themselves as powerful and influential in making things happen. Just as growing is an ever re-newing process so the needs of toddlers are similar and yet unique from infants. Certainly they need a 'life space' that includes proper nutrition, adequate safeguards, affectionate others, appropriate rest, and activity and alone times to integrate all the things in which they are suddenly enmeshed. Beyond these needs however, toddlers have a basic need for growing! They are now realizing that they are! I exist, I am somebody and I am to be somebody! Toddlers like to see themselves in mirrors, play with one or two other children for short periods of time, go places with people, be a part of things they were uninterested in as infants, and in general want to know, experience, and make things happen.

Although these new explorers want to invent, change, and control their destiny they are also observers of adults. They are very malleable and influenced by the way parents and other caregivers behave. They see our most insignificant habits as important. If people scream at them, they learn to scream. If they are rigidly scheduled and isolated from new explorations, they learn to fear the new, the unexplored. If toddlers are without guidance and left totally to act upon impulse they fail to learn how to explore within safe and sensible structures.

Eager to explore and growing rapidly toward early childhood these inquisitive toddlers need a balanced curriculum. They need parents and caregivers who provide guidance (not dictatorship), safe environments for exploring and inventing (not chaotic nor rigid learning settings), and examples of caring and useful adults behaviors. Any home or school curriculum for toddlers should include an emotionally stable environment. Essential to the toddlers being is the realization that 'things are basically okay'. Periodic family disputes or parental arguments are accepted by children when the continuity of parent and sibling behavior reflect positive and accepting modes of life. Acceptance by others (especially significant others) in home and school is vital to the child's sustained affective development. As toddlers recognize it is okay to be unique and still function as accepted group members they tend to build self confidence in their individual selves and organize constructive modes of relating to the needs and reasonable demands of other people.

The physical setting of the home and school influence the curriculum in which toddlers function. A well organized setting that contains materials such as blocks, kitchen utensils, simple puzzles, drawing and painting tools and realistic home and community items is an environment where toddlers can learn. Such as environment must incorporate safety measures for the protection of the children. Electrical outlets should be covered, poisons kept in locked places and fire hazards cleaned up or fixed. Indoor and outdoor play areas need to be cleaned often and maintenanced regularly so broken glass, rusty cans, and other dangerous items are kept away from the children. Safe streets and enclosed play areas make possible a curriculum where toddlers can move about, make things, and invent sand castles without fear of harm.

Socially, although egocentric, the toddler is naturally drawn to group situations – especially within the 'safety' of the family and in settings where she is the center of attention. Just as toddlers randomly reach for new objects they also test out their newfound social world. Does he like me? Will she hold me? My but he is scary! Oh, that feels warm! Maybe the words are lacking but the feelings of attachment (once limited to mother, father, or other adult caregiver) are now cautiously extended to the outer social world. Curricula experiences for young children should incorporate positive contacts with children and adults thus enabling them to build a set of constructive social behaviors.

Experiencing the visible signs of life – the initial emergence of consciousness – is a vital aspect in the life of toddlers. The recognition of friendly faces, being a part of family outings, peeking at the bumps on Aunt Helen's face, making a mud pie that others are proud of, playing with other children, and enjoying special events as part of the family are some of the more valuable learning experiences a curriculum for toddlers should include.

Balancing the curriculum is always important to the way children learn, mature, and behave. It is especially important to help children 'balance' their daily involvement with active experiencing and with more quiet, alone times. Human behavior patterns are formed very early in life. Learning to like one's self and to value others as well as to be at peace while alone is not learned at twenty-two but certainly can be initiated during the early years of life. Just as a picture is often valuable as a classroom lecture so it is with the models parents and other caregivers set for children. Instead of "it's time for your nap Ellen," try "let's rest together Ellen." Rather than the no, no, no's we often barrage the toddler with let us try to offer avenues for that creative energy Jenny wants so badly to release and use in finding herself.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS: VISIONS, DREAMS, AND LOVE AFFAIRS

The totality of being a child is experienced more completely during the early

childhood years than at any time during life. This feeling of togetherness, however, emerges only when conditions during infancy and toddlerhood have been facilitative of the integrative nature of human growth. When young children are treated in mechanical ways they behave as robots and form mechanistic living modes.

The two worlds of fantasy and reality are both 'real' worlds to young children. Helping children to use these worlds is the challenge facing parents, teachers, and other caregivers. People who work with young children in ways that enable them to grow through applying their visions and dreams toward understanding themselves and others as meaningful are truly responsible caregivers.

For example, Jimmy is describing what happened to him last night to his father during breakfast.

Jimmy: This dragon came right into my bed. I know he was thirsty so I gave him water. He was happy then!

Father: Wow, that was exciting! What happened then?

Jimmy: The dragon kissed me and flew right through the window.

Father: That dragon was sure strong.

Jimmy: Yup!

Jimmy and daddy – at work making a curriculum of fantasy which also links up to the real world of language development, social behaviors and the enhancement of creative thinking skills.

Or, let's peak in on Linda who is busy in the 'dress up' corner of the Children's World Day Care Center. Linda is putting on a large hat and patting her face with a wet sponge. Now she is setting a table, later she is calling her uncle in New York. The world of play is also Linda's 'learning center' for part of each day. It is a place where she can organize her life and make it work the way she wants it too! Later, Linda will join Mike and Sally in climbing on wooden toys, running and playing in other small group games. And, at lunch, she will sit with Jim, Ed, Maria, and Sally and eat a nutritious meal. Then a short rest period and still later a story told by Mr. Rint a volunteer father who comes often to share stories and games with the children.

Other scenes at Children's World include Billy sawing wood, Mark dancing to music, Suzi drawing pictures of frogs and fish, and Mrs. Linert setting up a water play area for George who just happened to bring his new wooden boat to school. Many other activities are planned for and with these young children. Field trips to places in the community where children can see and participate in expanding their world are a regular part of the curriculum.

The teachers and staff at Children's World recognize that the most intimate and impressionable forms of early childhood learning take place in the home

setting. "Parent involvement and parent education are important part of our program," says Mrs. Linert. "We want the center to be a place for the entire family – and the community too!"

Mrs. Linert continues: "A parent resource file is used throughout the year and we are now trying to visit parents who are at work so the children can see what their parents do during the day." "We have a parents corner where ideas for home learning activities and books and games are on display." The worlds of learning and growing are many – and parents have a captive audience in their children's interest in being a part of family activities.

A walk through the neighborhood, sharing a story with a four year old, playing kickball in the yard, getting groceries at the supermarket, relaxing together at home, visiting the local library, attending a family film, making holiday decorations, visiting relatives and friends, and doing family things together are enriching experiences for young children and their parents.

Young children are inquisitive! Answering their questions and enouraging them to ask questions and to develop their interests is a 'teaching behavior' parents can and often do perform with artistic skill. Involving children in cleaning the house, baking cookies, washing windows, raking leaves, and planning family outings prompts the children and parents to grow in an integrative manner. To be included in the important family activities is to be recognized as a part of life.

A curriculum for the early childhood years can and must be based upon the continuity of life – involving children, parents, and other caregivers in experiencing the diversity of human life. Meeting grandfather (or a foster grandparent) to take a walk through history or visiting 'mom' at the canning factory are the kinds of experiences that allow children to sense a continuity in life and for adults to visualize their children as positive forces emerging to become a part of the community.

Success at being who you are is an essential link in shaping a curriculum for young children. "I did it" can then become "We did it." "I can brush my teeth now," "I can tie my shoes now," "I made my toast." Building successful learning settings where children can build a sense of power is the most important task for early childhood educators. The transition from *ME TO WE* can be a natural part of growing when children find self and others as valued members of the human community.

What kind of curriculum can most effectively meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and young children? The answer exists in the adults who shape the environment in which children live. As adults are about the business of organizing a curriculum for and with young children they must incorporate growth promoting facets such as sound parent-child relations, proper nutrition, safe and secure learning spaces, variety and balance in daily routines and opportunities for children to mature and integrate their lives in productive ways.

ON CHILDREN AND BEHAVIOR

The way infants and young children learn to behave takes place within the context of their curriculum. What kinds of experiences do they have? How are they introduced to group situations – gradually and sequentially or randomly and without regard to their development? Do they have meaningful contacts with adults who value them? Are they provided opportunities to learn how to function successfully with others? Is their a social framework in which they CAN study how people behave and function – thus learning about differences and commonalities of human behavior? These questions, not often asked in a serious manner by caregivers, provide direction to the way children and adults learn how to behave.

Children and adults learn about behavior *together*. Mother and child affect each others behavior by the nature of their experiences with each other. Knowing something about the reciprocal processes of adult-child learning can enhance the relationships of children and adults. Mothers who have successful experiences with their infants are usually very positive about parenting thus promoting a productive setting for the child to learn about behavior. Child care workers who find enjoyment in their relationships with children most likely have received positive signals from the children about their place in the care center. The feeling that we teach and learn from each other is now becoming a generalized concept substantiated by the findings of the behavioral sciences.

We (as human beings) do not live on bread alone. Our psychological makeup influences our behavior as much as our psychological state. The writing of Richard Farson about the way children in our society are treated is indicative of the need for recognizing the 'personal integrity' of each child and adult. Further, the work of Selma Fraiberg makes clear the need for adults and children to nourish each others minds as well as their bodies. The recognition of infants as *important*, is or is not communicated to them very early in life. Whether it is called 'trust,' 'attachment,' or by some other term, the recognition by others that 'I' am needed is a starting point that early childhood curricula must be based on in theory and fact.

"Jimmy likes to dress up and be like his father!" "Mary is so nice to the other children, she's just like her mother." It is true that children and adults tend to reach as high or as low as the models and images of human behavior they see reflected in their mirrors of life. The pictures of life drawn by young children reflect very accurately the way they see and thus behave. Parents and other caregivers who listen, relate, help, and encourage children to be a part of life are implementing a curriculum that will influence children and provide them with a start toward becoming useful and joyful members of the human community.

ON CHILDREN AND ENERGY

The terms children and energetic are used in a synonymous context by parents, teachers, and others who work with young children. An entirely new set of words, phrases, and concepts are rapidly becoming a part of our lives. 'Non-renewing resources,' 'transition energy options,' 'energy crisis,' and other phrases appear daily in the news we read and watch. Shortages of various raw materials and contrived shortages of other materials have caused adults and children to alter their way of seeing the future – from unlimited means toward a more fallible view of what we can and cannot do!

A critical issue in our lives is how we will organize the physical and social environments to maximize the growth of human beings without inviting an eco-system disaster. As in many other instances, children and adults can learn from and with each other about how to use (and conserve) energy sources in efficient and yet creative ways. Learning about energy and the environment begins as early in life as the development of 'habits' in children.

The effects of adult modeling on children is evident in the way children formalize their styles of living. Think for a moment about the following adult behaviors as they affect children:

–The way we eat and what we eat;
–The things we throw away;
–The vacations we take;
–The way we drive;
–The way we treat each other;
–The way we use electricity and gas;
–The water we use and misuse;
–The way we treat ourselves.

Young children are very impressionable and look to us for leadership. If we waste food so let us not criticize our children for following our example. Through a conscious effort parents, teachers, and other caregivers can organize a curriculum of experiences where children can learn to view and use the physical environment in a sane and decent manner! *Learning to do more with less resources is a basic skill all of our children need in order to function capably during their lifetime.*

An important part of learning how to use the environment productively involves learning how to make judgments pertinent to the quality of life as opposed to making choices which simply meet our personal needs. What is important, even vital to life – energy to heat our homes and place of work, or the proliferation of leisure vehicles that consume needlessly the precious resources we have left?

Our children will face the choices of quality living for all or abusive life styles for a few. Will we as adults provide them with skills to handle these de-

cisions – choices which will determine whether civilization as we know it can survive?

TOWARD A NEW DAY WITH OUR CHILDREN

During the depression years when many people were pleasantly surprised to have survived experiences in which money, food, resources and leisure activities were scarce the future was defined as a better tomorrow for children. What mothers, fathers, teachers and yes – non-parents – had to go without was transmitted into dreams and plans for the next generation. And, then there was a time of plenty! Abundance, affluence – not for all – but certainly for too many who were not prepared to deal with making choices when EVERYTHING seemed possible. Mass transportation, lengthy vacations, food-a-plenty, large houses, big automobiles, seductive clubs, expanded bank accounts, and endless credit were signs of a culture group that superficially had mastered the immediate environment!

A generation of children were raised in an environment in which the "I" reigned supreme. 'Too much – too soon' became a common saying among those who had seen and lived in times of challenge and growth. A social malaise set in during the times of affluence – to be sure it did not infect all people but subtly seduced many who felt the comfort of living for today without the immediate worry of tomorrow.

AND NOW we are experiencing a time of limits – where people are gradually realizing that tomorrow can BE only with their involvement in planning and developing settings that will make it possible. The children of today will inherit a world where they must do more with less in terms of resources and space. They will need to organize new life styles in which the quality of living is more important than the quantity of goods people have accumulated. Smaller homes, less use of natural resources, and more equitable distribution of life support services will be necessary for human survival.

What we do today as children and adults will shape the kinds of decisions made by people in the year 2000. Children are watching us as we make our many choices that shape their lives and either give meaning or blasphemy to our lives. Together, as children and adults, we can help each other organize the initial arrangement where:

- conservation of resources is the rule rather than the exception;
- utilization of food and other resources is equitablized;
- the nature of human relationships is valued more than the technological arrangement;
- basic health, social, and safety services are shared among all people and based upon the industrious behavior of people;

– an educated world citizenry exists to enhance the quality of life by utilizing the diverse talents of people in all cultures.

There are those cynics who will see all of this as a misguided journey. Yet during the past fifty years mankind has witnessed significant gains in the quality of life only to be off set by abuses in the way that wealth has been shared. Together, with our children we can move toward a new day where quality living is the concern of all the people on this earth.

Discussion Questions

1. Identify and discuss ways schools and other community agencies can assist future parents in preparing for being effective parents.
2. In developing preschool programs for infants and toddlers, what steps should be taken to insure parent participation?

Suggested Readings

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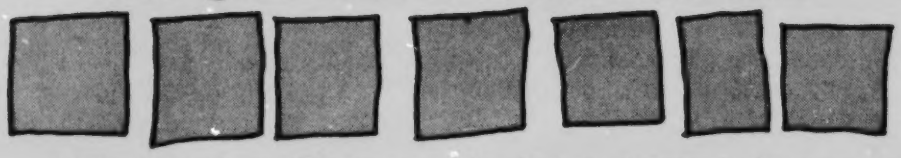
chapter three

the parenting process: implications for parent involvement



At the base of any effective parent involvement program is the parent and the myriad of parenting roles they perform. Too often the parent is viewed by educators as an addendum to the school program; a worker, helper, supporter and aide to the teacher and staff of the school. Indeed parents can and do perform such roles for the school. But in performing these and other roles parents are not simply added help to the school staff; they are, and must be, an integral part of the educational process as parents. And the parenting process is changing from the predominant two parent family to more varied arrangements.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF PARENTING

The development of workable parent-teacher involvement programs must be based upon an understanding of the parenting process. The emergence of the two parent working family, increased societal pressures for individuals to fulfill more self-centered goals, and the concurrent shifting of a community-centered value system to a more individualistic orientation have created a very complex set of social and psychological variables in which parents and children must carry on the process of family living.

The social bonds of the family which existed in the past such as the extended family, strong parental relationships, one parent working families, and clearly defined sex roles in terms of family functions have all but vanished. In their place a variety of family situations have emerged. Today it is common for teachers to find children in their classrooms to be from one parent families, two parent working families, and parent surrogate family settings.

Many social and economic forces have impinged upon the family during the

past twenty-five years. The production of goods and services on a mass scale has increased the expectations of people in terms of their desired life styles. The availability of conveniences, media and rapid transit forms of transportation have made it more desirous for people to increase their material style of living. In order to acquire these goods and services many parents have had to increase their time on the job and decrease their time in the home.

These economic changes have effected the social setting in which people exist. As more women have entered the labor market their desire to achieve a more independent status within the society has increased. Similarly, those men who have taken on two jobs to pay the increased costs of living have less time to devote to family and school activities. The rapid economic and concurrent societal value changes have effected parental and family relations in many ways. There are more divorced couples today than in times past and parents who are together find they have less time to spend with each other, their children, and/or as volunteers in school and civic events.

The American family of today is existing within a social setting where traditional family and parenting roles are very difficult to implement on a day to day basis. The family today is not as it was in 1940 nor should it be expected to have stood still as the culture changed. Indeed the rural family of times past may be more a nostalgic dream than a reality. The supposedly stable and child-centered family of early rural America seems to have collapsed from the very same economic and social conditions that are effecting parents and children today.

Although some parents and children have been negatively effected by contemporary social changes, it must be noted that many families are together and functioning as well as, if not better than, families of past decades. The important thing for educators to remember as they develop parent involvement programs is that the parenting process is more complex and diverse today than at any time in our history. Thus, an effective parent involvement program will contain many different ways for parents to become involved in the school.

PARENTS PERFORM MANY ROLES

Parents are involved in the education or miseducation of their children from the conception of the child. Through 'parenting' the parent *is* involved in the educational process. Parents perform a variety of roles which make them very significant people in the lives of their children. Unfortunately, many non-parents often view parents as individuals whose influences on life end at the front door of the home. This is, of course, an incorrect view of the parenting process as it is occurring in our society today. An examination of the many roles parents perform in their child rearing capacity provides some insight into the importance of viewing parents as key members of the teaching-learning team.

THE PARENT AS INDIVIDUAL PERSON.

Every parent is first an individual who has developed and continues to develop a personality composed of attitudes and behaviors that influence their performance as parents. Before an individual can be a competent and caring parent, he must first be effective as a person. Individuals who feel good about themselves and who find fulfillment in their personal lives make for more effective parents than those individuals who find life as personally disappointing and feel incapable of functioning as growing, becoming human beings.

Parents, as individual persons, must have a personal life in which they can explore, enrich and develop their interests in constructive ways. Parents who have hobbies, social interests and other activities not only develop their individual selves, but also provide their children with models of positively functioning human beings. As these parents bring a wholeness to life, they also bring a completeness to the process of parenting. Educators who are relating to parents should understand them in terms of their selves as well as their more formal parenting roles.

THE PARENT AS PRODUCER.

An integral part of the parenting process is the role of production of goods and services by parents. Parents spend much time during their parenting years in work efforts which provide the economic sustenance for their families and contribute to the well-being of other members of the community.

An important aspect of this parenting role is the function the producing of goods and services for others plays in establishing a positive work model for the young child. Whatever career or task the parent performs, he is involved in depicting a way of life for the young learner. It is not so much what the parent is doing in the world of work as it is the *way* he is doing it. An individual may be working in the steel mills of Gary, Indiana, the corn fields of Iowa, or the cotton mills of Maine; the important questions revolve around how the individual approaches his work and the model he provides for his children in terms of productivity as it relates to the maintenance of societal goals. In designing parent involvement programs, educators need to incorporate the work roles parents perform in the plans and activities of the program.

THE PARENT AS CONSUMER.

The most common behavior members of our society perform is the consumption of goods and services. Parents are among the largest group of consumers in our society. They buy homes, foods, automobiles, vacations, clothes and consume many resources such as natural gas, oil, and coal. Thus, parents establish through their buying habits, a model of consumer habits, a map of buying modes for their children. Parents, as consumers, can provide a positive

model for their children by developing constructive and balanced consumer spending patterns. Currently our society is confronting a situation where sources of energy are less than the demand for them. Parents and teachers can model frugal use of these valuable resources and thus develop in the younger generation an appreciation for these non-renewable energy sources.

The effective educator involves parents in consumer roles in two ways; one, involving them in consumer education programs, and two, involving them as classroom resources in consumer education units of study for the students. Parents are always eager to learn more about how to maximize use of their finances. In the same respects, most parents would be happy to visit the classroom and explain how they spend finances to support their families. The parent as a consumer of goods and services is a role which educators need to focus on more in the teaching-learning process. All members of the human community need to learn to do more with less consumption of resources.

THE PARENT AS EDUCATOR.

Parents are the first and potentially the most continuous educators children ever have during their lifetime. The decisions parents make when choosing a place to live, how to feed the infant, when and where to spend time with their children, and how they will discipline the young toddler all combine to become the first curriculum children experience. During the childhood years parents either educate their children by providing them with consistent and secure environments where learning materials and experiences are plentiful or miseducate their children by failing to become involved in the important tasks of child rearing.

The school can foster and facilitate this role by involving parents in parent education programs that focus on ways they can promote the development and learning of their children. In addition, many parents will benefit by being involved in the learning process as it occurs in the school environment. There are many parents who, because of economic and/or social problems, are unable to carry out their educational role with their children. School leaders have a special responsibility to support these parents through child care programs, the use of home aides to assist parents with child care problems and the provision of adult education programs where indigent parents can acquire useable skills for resolving their problems. Together, parents and educators are the most potent educational and social forces in the lives of children.

THE PARENT AS ETHICAL MODEL.

Parents teach values, attitudes and morals by their examples and through their involvement with infants and children. Parents who nurture their infants by taking care of the feeding, cleaning and protective tasks vital to the survival of infants are building a trusting environment where children will perceive life in a positive manner. As children develop physically and socially parents can and

should promote responsible work and play habits, encourage respect for authority and require in children a respect for cultural differences and the rights of individuals to pursue their interests without irrational interference from others.

The school is or should be an extension of the family and thereby encourage the formation of productive behaviors among children. Teachers and parents can assist each other in this endeavor by involving themselves in parent-teacher education sessions in which the ethical problems confronting young learners are explicated and discussed. The objective being to develop some common agreement among themselves (parents and teachers) on how to promote positive ethical development in the younger generation. As parents and educators are involved in this process, they will find ways to improve their own lives and thus provide ethical models for their children.

THE PARENT AS COMMUNITY MEMBER.

People who become parents are usually (unfortunately not always) involved in community events. Schools of every type require the support of community members and parents are key people in bringing about a better relationship between the school and the community. As members of the community parents serve their fellow citizens by paying taxes, nurturing their children, participating in the operation of youth programs, serving as members of community boards and by involving themselves in various political and social service roles.

As active citizens in the community parents acquire many skills that educators need to capitalize on in terms of reaching out to improve their community relations. When school personnel view parents in a multi-dimensional perspective, they will find them to be interested and capable of promoting a more positive image of the school to all members of the community.

Parents as individuals are diverse in the roles they perform. It is the task of all school personnel to gain a better understanding of these parenting roles and to begin utilizing parents as partners in developing a more functional school program. In the same perspective, parents need to realize the significant role that teachers and other school leaders play in shaping the lives of their children. Parents are not simply parents nor are teachers just teachers; beyond these child caring roles are individuals who have many skills to contribute to the development of a truly humane home-school-community program.

MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT FOR ALL PARENTS

There are many parents who desire to be involved in school programs but are never approached by educators in the proper fashion. Each parenting team is unique in the way they live, work and function as the family leadership coordinators. A major weakness in our educational programs has been the tendency to involve only those parents who best symbolized what 'we' thought parents

should be like. Such an educational viewpoint of parent involvement has eliminated many people from the educational program. The two parent working family, for example, may not be able to do the things that the one parent working family can do, but such a family can be involved in the educational program in many ways.

Educators have utilized or supported the use of individualized instructional approaches with children. A similar application of the concept of individualization to parent involvement programs is needed. Parents are individuals with unique situations that change as their children develop and as their families are involved in acquiring an identity. Consider the following as examples of varying parental situations and as possible ways of adapting the parent involvement process to the special needs of each family.

Example One

THE PARENTING TEAM SITUATION: Ed and Mary Johnson have three young children (one is in third grade, one in kindergarten and the baby is just a year old). They both work full time in order to make the needed finances for operating their household. Mr. Johnson is a welder and Mrs. Johnson a secretary. Mrs. Johnson's mother watches the baby during the day. The Johnson's spend their weekends doing the chores such as housecleaning, shopping and washing the clothes. They are known as good parents whose children are well behaved in school and community. But Ed and Mary Johnson admit they know very little about the school and wish they could be of more help to the school.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POSSIBILITIES: It must be noted that Ed and Mary Johnson are already very involved parents. By being productive and capable parents they are helping the school inwhat is unfortunately a hidden capacity: nurturing the development of their children. Educators must be careful in not destroying parents like the Johnson's by over involving them in school tasks that might strain the existing family relations. There are appropriate parent involvement techniques that can be utilized to enhance the Johnson's perceptions of the school. An early morning open house continental breakfast, evening parent-teacher conferences, spring family-school picnics, parents night out, school newsletter and teacher initiated phone contacts are suitable ways of involving busy parents such as the Johnson's.

Example Two

THE PARENTING TEAM SITUATION: Lisa Renz is a recently divorced parent. She has custody of the two children Ann and Bob. Ann is in eighth grade and Bob in third grade. Mrs. Renz works during the day in a factory and three nights a week as a waitress in a cocktail lounge. She receives no child support as her husband is an alcoholic and is under psychiatric care. Ann, who is in eighth

grade, is confused and rarely at home. Bob is too good and too quiet! He is doing poorly in school and is essentially lost in terms of his identity. Bob likes his dad and wants to be with his dad. Mrs. Renz dates many men and spends her free time entertaining her friends in her apartment. She is interested in the education of her children, but has never felt welcomed in the school.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POSSIBILITIES: Lisa Renz is among a growing number of single parents who are left with the job of raising their children. Mrs. Renz is involved with her children in a very difficult situation; a predicament educators are quick to condemn but often fail to understand. The situation in which Lisa Renz exists is indicative of the problems many single parents confront today. In such situations educators need to consider the parent-teacher partnership in terms of the family's needs as well as the needs of the school. Initial parent involvement activities in Mrs. Renz's case would be in the form of the school assisting the Renz family in dealing with their problems. The school, in conjunction with other social agencies, can arrange for home assistance helpers and/or skilled child care workers to help with some of the home management tasks. In addition, the school might be able to provide the children with tutors or other instructional services to aid them in maintaining their studies. Special school programs can be developed for single parents as a way of involving them in school functions. The important thing is that parents like Mrs. Renz have much to contribute to their children and the school. Capable teachers and related school personnel should organize their parent involvement programs to include all parents in a productive home-school relationship.

Example Three

THE PARENTING TEAM SITUATION: Dr. and Mrs. Elton are the parents of three children. Aron is in sixth grade, Sally in her third year of high school and Joe is a sophomore in college. Dr. Elton is a very successful dentist and active member of many community service groups. Mrs. Elton is a homemaker and enjoys helping with community projects and school events. The Elton's young family is suddenly 'growing up' and Mrs. Elton now has more time to devote to church and community affairs. The Elton family has their problems but are looked up to in the community as very fine people.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POSSIBILITIES: The Elton's are entering a stage of parenting in which their children are more autonomous and self-sufficient in handling their own lives. Mrs. Elton, who no longer is confronted with the task of meeting the needs of infants or very young children, can become more involved in school and community activities. She may desire to become a classroom volunteer or to handle some of the organizational tasks of the parent-teacher organization. Dr. Elton, who has always been active in community events, would be an ideal person to help with school improvement programs and as a resource person

in various capacities and desire to be of assistance to the school. Perceptive school leaders will take every opportunity to involve parents such as the Elton's in school programs and activities.

The Johnson's, Elton's, and Mrs. Renz are parents who, although they have quite different situations, are interested in being effective parents and involved in the education of their children. There are other parents who, because of their unique predicaments, can only find a meaningful relationship with the school when educators provide a flexible parent-teacher involvement program. For example, there are homes where grandparents, uncles, aunts, the eldest daughter or other parent surrogates are the primary care givers for the children. The school must involve these 'parents' in the educational program according to their individual needs and aspirations.

The parenting process today is enacted in many different ways and by parents who are in varying family settings. Parents perform many roles and are indeed individuals who have talents and skills they can use in the home, the community and the school. A major challenge facing educators is the development of parent-teacher partnerships in which every parent and teacher can find purposeful direction in their attempts to nurture their children.

Discussion Questions

1. Parents of infants and toddlers are busy people. What would be the most effective way to help such parents acquire some initial contacts with school personnel?
2. Parents who have special problems such as an alcoholic mate, a child on drugs or related marital problems often feel uncomfortable about participating in school events. What are some approaches you think could be used to involve the parent who has special problems in school events and programs.

Suggested Readings

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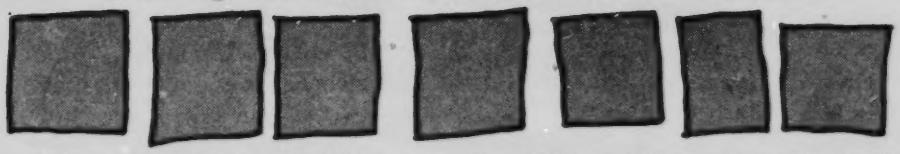
chapter four

the teaching-learning process: implications for parent involvement



The instructional process is a composite of the teaching and learning activities that take place in the home, school and community. School programs are operated in many different ways ranging from the self-contained classroom to the open space concept of learning. It is common to find varying school organizational patterns within the same school district. Some examples of organizational designs being used in schools today are: the non-graded program, individualized instruction, individually guided education, informal, open education and the learning centers design.

The way children are involved in the process of education is also changing. As opposed to the once popular large group instructional approach, a variety of small group and individualized teaching-learning modes are now being utilized in schools throughout our society. The use of computers and various multi-media devices has altered the way children learn. Various methods of grouping children for instruction is another example of the ever changing nature of the educational process. Thus, as the parenting process is now typified by diversity, so the teaching process is now exemplified by varying methods and procedures used to involve students in the learning arrangement.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF TEACHING

Capable teachers have always used a variety of methods and materials in their instructional program. The teacher of today, however, must be prepared to take on many roles, organize diverse instructional settings, operate sophisticated equipment, select appropriate learning materials, evaluate pupil performance, communicate with staff, children, parents and community, and continue to improve their professional expertise through in-service education programs. In es-

sence the teacher of today must be a person who is about the process of self renewal and continuously in search of improved methods of helping children and parents participate in a meaningful learning arrangement.

Teachers, like parents, perform many roles in attempting to help children learn. Teachers and parents by the very nature of their lives are (or should be) idealists. They see in children a chance for a better life as a result of their efforts. The various roles teachers perform are often taken for granted. The over-professionalization of teachers has created a situation where the lay person often perceives the educator as a technocrat who is unconcerned about the children, the family or the community.

THE TEACHER AS PERSON

The teacher who goes beyond the lesson plan to reach children in a personal sense is actualizing the real meaning of teaching. Teachers above all else are *persons* with hopes, fears, desires and convictions. Teachers are people who want to experience life and share it with infants, children and their parents in a productive manner. Each teacher is a person with a set of experiences that shapes their attitudes toward other people, especially the children they teach.

One of the characteristics of teachers is the diversity of lifestyles, cultures, and beliefs they represent. As children proceed with their schooling they may encounter teachers who are married and have families, single teachers who live productively but in a more independent manner, young teachers who have high ideals, experienced teachers who are wise decision makers, and teachers from many other backgrounds. This personal diversity which exists within the profession is a vital force in the process of education. It should be nurtured and cherished rather than feared or destroyed by citizens and parents of all communities.

Educators must continually renew their personal selves and utilize themselves as positive factors in the teaching-learning process. Whatever the personal life of the teacher it can, when used appropriately, be a productive part of the learning experiences of the children. Teachers who attempt to enrich their personal lives through travel, education, and selected recreational activities usually improve their teaching lives, too! The teacher who never finds time to be more of their self will eventually be unable to enact the nurturance skills so vital in teacher-child-parent relationships.

THE TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL

The professional educator is (or should be) an individual who can perform many skills in classroom and extra-classroom learning settings. As a professional the teacher plans, organizes and implements a program of learning situations in which the children can develop new skills or expand upon their existing set of behaviors.

One of the most important but often overlooked behaviors of the teacher is the ethical and attitudinal perspective he or she enacts in relating to children and their parents. Children do not come to school alone; rather they bring with them a set of beliefs they have developed within the home environment. The *professional* teacher responds to the total life context of children and includes the family in instructional concerns as well as adapting the classroom to the needs of children from diverse home environments.

The complexities of our social setting and the ever increasing demands for well educated people has effected the roles teachers must perform in and out of the classroom setting. In addition to knowing content and disseminating information todays teacher must be able to facilitate the learning of the child by organizing an arrangement where the child and the parents can relate the substance of school to their lives and to the future world in which they hope to participate.

Too often the term professional is equivocated with the term technical. The technical skills the teacher uses such as diagnosing student needs, planning classroom instructional activities, selecting appropriate learning materials and evaluating pupil progress as vital links to successful educational programs. Yet, the professional person is above all else an idealist with a human road map that leads toward a better existence for people. The truly professional teacher is a person with humane goals and the technical know how needed to involve themselves, children and parents in a continuous examination of life through well planned learning segments.

THE TEACHER AS A MODEL

Teachers are among the adult models children continuously have contact with and thus often look to as a source of ideas and moral reason. The way in which educators conduct themselves is important in terms of the model of behavior they set for children. Teachers have always been significant in their influence upon children. In the complex society of today the modeling influence is of special importance because the children of today need positive human examples they can relate and respond to at home, in the school, and throughout the community.

Teachers (and related educational personnel) who plan and implement parent involvement programs are modeling cooperative behaviors for children. The teacher-isolate, that teacher who remains aloof from external family and community members is enacting a negative example for children. Such a teacher is limiting the instructional environment to the classroom and thus delimiting the learning possibilities for the children and their parents. Today's children need as many examples of cooperative living as is possible within the cultural setting. Teachers must incorporate positive social behaviors in the instructional model they present to children – in and out of the school setting.

When a teacher ignores a child in the classroom he is communicating to the

child that he is unimportant. The nonverbal behavior of the teacher is often a key factor in the type of instruction being provided children. Children and parents need to be listened to, involved in classroom decisions and made a part of the teaching-learning team. Teachers provide children and parents with a model of how they believe the world should work by the way they either relate and respond to the total family or fail to involve parents and children in school events.

NEW ROLES FOR TEACHERS

The changes that have taken place in our society have effected parents and teachers and the roles they perform in their personal and professional lives. The nature of parenting has changed. The nature of teaching has changed. A necessary part of the teaching act today is the enactment of new roles by the educator – in-and-out of the classroom. These 'new' roles are the keys teachers must use in making the teaching-learning process meaningful to children, parents and themselves. Although these roles have been a part of teaching in the past they have taken on a new meaning in education today because of the very complexity of living and learning in our society.

THE TEACHER-PERSON

Amidst all of the innovative approaches to teaching introduced during the past twenty years (including the affective education movement), the focus of the programs and approaches has been on the materials and the 'how to' behaviors the teacher can use to *make it work*. Yet it is the person who is the teacher that makes any program come alive through his or her relationship with the children. The caring teacher combines competence in methodological procedures with compassion for the personal needs of the children and their families.

The personal life of the teacher affects his teaching performance in the classroom. A teacher who has personal problems, financial difficulties or related individual concerns needs the support of their peers, the children and their parents. Self actualizing teachers are aware of the role their personal lives play in their teaching and attend to developing this facet of life. The productive, sincere and capable teacher-person is able to relate to the children as people. Parents relate to teachers who are able to see their lives as important. Parent-teacher partnerships must be based upon the personal aspects of teaching and parenting.

THE TEACHER-COUNSELOR

Children bring themselves, their desires and their questions to school. Children seek out people they respect for help, a friendly and trusting ear and to have someone they can admire and yet relate to in the process of living. The teacher is hopefully the type of person who children can reach out to for human counsel.

The authentic teacher is a counselor in dealing with the lives of the children in the classroom. When a choice has to be made between the lesson plan and the needs of the children the teacher-counselor chooses in favor of the children.

Parents are often desirous of being in touch with other people who are humane in their approach to life. Teachers who are positive in their contacts with parents will be sought out by parents for counsel on matters pertaining to their children and themselves as parents. Parent involvement programs need teachers and parents who can counsel each other in a trusting and confidential manner. An effective teacher-counselor enters into parent-teacher relationships with the attitude of learning from parents as well as assisting parents in any way possible.

THE TEACHER-ORGANIZER

As school leaders have attempted to adopt more flexible learning programs the classroom teacher has become more of an organizer of learning situations than a disseminator of information. A key to lifelong learning relates to the individual's ability to locate and use information and experiences in a productive manner. As teachers organize the learning environment they must utilize planning skills, assessment procedures and human relations skills to formulate the proper environment for learning to take place.

In order to maximize the value of classroom learning situations teachers need to involve parents in the organizational process and to organize learning situations where parents, teachers and children work together on projects of mutual value to all concerned. As classroom environments are planned by teachers the needs and situations of the families of the community should be a part of the organizational concerns used to develop curricular activities for children and parents.

THE TEACHER-FACILITATOR

A major concern of teachers today is the frustration they experience in attempting to relate to children and their families on a personal basis. Many teachers want to nurture, support, respond and foster more humane climates in which young children learn. These same teachers desire personal relationships with parents and citizens of the community. The skills of reaching and teaching children are of necessity very intimate human skills that require the teacher to be a human being of the highest quality.

Teachers facilitate the development of the child by involving parents (regardless of their situation or background) in the learning process and by supporting parents as partners in the child care process. Teacher-facilitators are aware of the significant role parents play in the educational process and are cognizant of the problems parents face in attempting to meet the needs of their children. To facilitate is to assist, make possible or to foster the conditions vital to the growth of human beings. Teachers, above all else, must be facilitators – making possible the

emergence of a new generation that can make life meaningful. Society, in turn, must be supportive of teachers in their endeavor to be quality educators who make learning relevant to children, parents and citizens of the community.

THE TEACHER-TEAM MEMBER

The process of education is no longer conducted only within the confines of the self-contained, single teacher directed format. This is not saying that self-contained classrooms are unproductive places for teaching and learning. It is to say that current teaching-learning practices are beginning to focus on teaming. The teacher team member is cognizant of the shared nature of learning and skilled in working with team members in a cooperative, supportive way.

The teacher as team member realizes that the teaching-learning team is comprised of children, parents, teachers and citizens of varied backgrounds from the community. The effective teacher works as a team leader; organizing, coordinating and orchestrating the people within the home-school-community environment to bring about a continuous teacher-learning cycle where everyone is part of the action. Whether teachers are functioning in self-contained classrooms, non-graded programs, or open space designs they must be team members and team leaders. Parent involvement programs flourish when the concept of teaming is predominant in the activities conducted by parents, children, teachers and citizens of the community.

Teaching in the society today is exciting, challenging, demanding and can be rewarding if educators recognize that they are one resource for children to utilize in their growth process. Parents, children, citizens and the complexities of the human environment are sources upon which the 'teaming teacher' builds a relevant school curriculum. Teaching today requires that educators be more than information disseminators; they must be *persons*, *professionals*, *organizers*, *facilitators* and *team members*.

TEACHING AND PARENTING

Teaching and parenting are the most important tasks performed by people in any society. Parents and teachers establish the parameters in which infants, children and young adults develop physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. The fabric of future societies is in the hands of teachers and parents. Parents initiate the learning and development of infants by providing a nurturant, safe and pleasant home environment. Teachers and child care workers continue nurturing the young child by involving the child in meaningful growth activities and by helping the child relate to a world beyond the home. Teachers and parents working together as a team set the stage for the child to emerge as a productive person who can relate to self and others in humane ways.

A COMMON GOAL

Parents and teachers have a common goal of guiding children in the direction of becoming humane persons who value themselves and other individuals and who are capable of participating in the human endeavor to create a better life for all citizens of the world. As teachers and parents formulate their home and school partnership they should make sure that what they attempt to do coincides with their goal of helping children become positive and secure people.

A COMMON PARTNERSHIP

Teachers and parents have many things in common: (1) they are the real social leaders of the culture, (2) they are talented and multi-faceted individuals, (3) they confront the challenges of helping children become mature and responsible persons, (4) they search for answers related to the process of human development, and (5) they are usually growing and responsive people who need support to perform the tasks of nurturing the young of the society. Parents and teachers, as they form the home-school partnership, need to be supportive of each other; grasping the significance of the roles they perform and developing an understanding of the special situations each confronts in attempting to teach and parent young children. In this way an authentic teacher-parent partnership will emerge and benefit everyone in the community.

A COMMON EFFORT

The teacher-parent relationship involves a common effort to provide children with the highest quality environment in which they can develop their selves in the most positive way possible. This common effort involves parents and teachers in many mutually beneficial activities. Parents and teachers perform skills such as assisting the child in understanding the world around him, providing for the child in terms of basic survival needs such as food, love and security, and facilitating the child so he can begin to develop self sufficient behaviors so vital to functioning in group situations.

In order to establish a common effort and a meaningful relationship, teachers and parents need to be in touch with each other. Teachers must be reaching parents in terms of the child as he is behaving in school. Likewise, parents must be responsive to teacher needs and involved in the school. The communications between teachers and parents must be of a positive and facilitative nature if the common effort they are about is to take place in a productive fashion.

A COMMON PROCESS

The process of life, if examined by people within rational settings, can be a growing, self actualizing and socially meaningful experience. Parents and teachers

are key people in the designing and implementing of the life settings in which children exist. Teachers and parents set examples – through their own behavior on how to live. Children model these behaviors and, thus, establish a mode of relating to other people.

The nature of teaching and parenting has changed. The challenges confronting teachers and parents are related to the kind of environment our children learn from and become a part of through participation in life. Thus, teachers and parents need to establish a team relationship with their primary purpose being the enhancement of life for their children and themselves.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the ways in which teaching has changed during the past thirty years? How have these changes effected the way parents and teachers work together?
2. In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion about the 'competent teacher' and the 'competent parent'. List (and then discuss as a group) the things you believe make up a competent parent and teacher.

Suggested Readings

John C. Berclay, *Parent Involvement in the Schools*. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1977.

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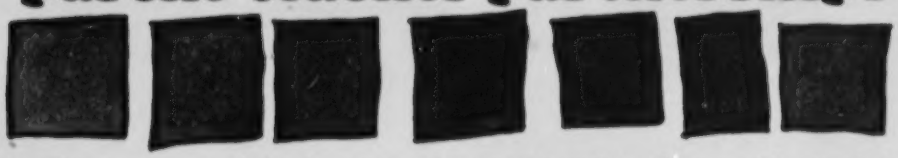
chapter five

goals for effective parent-teacher partnerships



There are a myriad of reasons why parents and teachers need to work together in providing young learners with the best of possible educational programs. Schools rich in parent-teacher interaction and involvement can often overcome various problems they face by attempting to meet the needs of an ever changing society. Public concerns over educational accountability can be rationally handled when parents are actively involved in the educational process; support and stability of the family can be strengthened when the school recognizes the parent as the child's first and most important teacher. Since the school and the parents share concern for the welfare of children, it is only logical that they work to develop a cooperative, coordinated relationship. Creating this mutually supportive relationship is the purpose of a parent involvement program. The following are some of the more important goals and objectives that every parent-teacher involvement program should strive to achieve. Indeed, teachers in working with parent-teacher organizations may want to utilize this chapter of the book as the basis for formulating their own parent-teacher involvement program goals and objectives.

IMPROVED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

A major goal of parent-teacher involvement programs must be to provide children with improved environments and conditions for learning. By working cooperatively to achieve the following objectives, parents and teachers can take steps toward accomplishing this goal.

1. Parents and teachers will work together to find appropriate methods of relating to the children in home and school settings. Study groups and training

sessions which focus on positive guidance techniques for children should be designed and instituted for joint teacher-parent participation. Emphasis of the sessions should be upon the importance of adult behaviors in affecting self-control and self-discipline in children as opposed to the traditional, punitive concept of discipline.

2. Parents and teachers will work together in providing children with a physically safe and educationally relevant educational program. For example, parent-teacher groups may conduct annual review sessions related to the physical setting of the school.

3. Parents and teachers will work together to develop home, neighborhood, school, and community settings conducive to the healthy social and emotional development of the child. Parent-teacher groups may provide the impetus for designing productive youth programs in the community.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS AMONG PARENTS, TEACHERS, CHILDREN

A vital goal for any parent-teacher involvement program is to improve the quality of human interaction among the members of the learning team. The implementation of the following objectives can be an initial step toward the accomplishment of this goal.

1. Parents and teachers will plan and implement on-going opportunities for parent-teacher discussions of issues and concerns related to the education of their children. For example, parents and teachers will attempt to:
   a. Make the most of numerous informal contacts.
   b. Maintain continuous communication with each other.
   c. Keep the flow of information moving in both directions.
2. Parents and teachers will conduct numerous conferences each school year related to the progress and development of the children in the school.
3. Parents and teachers will provide a learning setting in the home and school where children can communicate with them on their concerns. (At appropriate stages of development the children will be involved in conferences.)

IMPROVED PARENT AND TEACHER SELF CONCEPT

When parents and teachers view themselves as important influences they relate to children in more constructive modes. Thus parents and teachers should make every effort to relate to each other in ways that enhance their lives. Without doubt, the most difficult step to be taken by the teacher is that of internalizing, then demonstrating, sincere willingness to acknowledge and become empatheti-

cally sensitive to the relationship between the child and his parents. Then, from such an awareness, to look for ways to improve and strengthen that relationship. By implementing the following objectives parents and teachers can begin to construct a climate for mutual self-enhancement.

1. Parents and teachers will work toward developing communication styles by which they relate positively to each other and thus model appropriate interaction skills for their children.
   a. Teachers need opportunities for introspection and reflection with respect to their personal and professional attitudes about working cooperatively with parents. They need experience through which to develop appropriate communication and teaming skills.
   b. Parents should have opportunities to be guided toward understanding ways they can support the professionally trained teacher. They also need experiences in developing their communication and teaming skills.
2. Parents and teachers will develop activities which provide opportunities for them to recognize each other as important people who perform very significant functions in the learning process. Opportunities should be provided for parents and teachers to discuss and design (what for them and their particular situation) may be a working model of involvement.
3. Parents and teachers will develop an understanding of the roles and functions of the processes of parenting and teaching. The effective teacher or efficient parent recognizes the need to understand (and modify behaviors as societal changes occur) the current trends in these two vital roles.

IMPROVED PARENT, TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In order for parents and teachers to continuously perform in effective ways with children they need to be involved in on-going educational programs. The following objectives provide one perspective by which this goal can be accomplished.

1. Parents and teachers will work toward providing support to the concept of on-going educational in-service programs. Attention should be given to joint programs and experiences. The parent-teacher organization might sponsor in-service programs for teachers and parents as a part of their annual program.
2. Parents and teachers will develop, in cooperation with school administrators, a parent education program in which parents can acquire information on issues and problems related to the parenting process. Parent education for effective parenting and teaching is built upon the recognition of the parent as an active participant, with the program evolving from the jointly determined needs of both parents and teachers.

3. Parents and teachers, in cooperation with the school administration, will promote and develop quality in-service and staff improvement programs. Effective and successful administrators recognize that stability and trust in the school is built when the administrator serves actively as a true instructional leader. In this leadership role he encourages openness, discussion, opportunities for clarification of issues, and he makes decisions which take into account the concerns of the parents, children, and professional staff of the school district.

IMPROVED COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

Community support of the educative process is essential to the development and maintenanee of quality educational programs. Parent-teacher involvement groups should work toward keeping the community informed on what is happening in school and aware of the significance of quality education programs. The following objectives provide a useful format for accomplishing this goal.

1. Parents and teachers will develop means by which they can keep the community informed of the kind of education programs that the public supported schools are providing for young children. Joint efforts in developing information systems, newsletters, and television are imperative to effective school community relations.

2. Parents and teachers will develop a variety of projects (educational and social) which involve the school and community in partnership efforts to enhance the life of the children and young people in the community. Jointly sponsored recreational and student work programs are just two examples of possible school-community cooperation.

3. Parents and teachers will visit and work with various community agencies and service groups on joint projects which promote quality educational programs for children and young adults. Attention should be given to services available to children and families with special needs from various community agencies. The development of comprehensive child care is one possible project for the entire community.

IMPROVED PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRAMS

Parent-teacher organizational programs provide the binding force of the instructional process. Too often parent-teacher organizations become social events or even worse dissolve into confrontation areas. Parents and teachers should work toward the development of a strong, constructive, and on-going organizational structure in which they can accomplish the development of effective educational programs. The following objectives provide a framework for

accomplishing this important goal.

1. Parents and teachers will work together in forming an organizational structure by which a useful and on-going parent-teacher group can function. Successful and effective programs are structured around openness, sincerity and supportive attitudes as opposed to control, power, and ownership.

2. Parents and teachers will cooperate in developing mutual and consistent times throughout the school year for holding parent-teacher organizational meetings. Attention will be given to family-life schedules.

3. Parents and teachers will work toward making the parent-teacher organization an area for discussion and problem solving by all members of school-community setting.

IMPROVED TEACHER-ADMINISTRATIVE RELATIONS

As the education profession has entered the era of negotiations many school-community settings have been overwhelmed by legalities, have experienced confrontations among staff and administration, and generally, have been negatively effected in terms of personal relationships. Parent and teacher groups must address themselves to developing means to improve the human interaction and human relations of all the school staff. The following are some specific objectives parents and teachers can use as guide posts in working toward accomplishing this goal.

1. Parents and teachers will work together in sponsoring and implementing school staff, administrative communication and problem solving sessions.

2. Parents and teachers will work toward developing constructive settings in which the school administration can carry out its functions in positive ways. Emphasis upon clarity and openness on the part of all members of the learning team can greatly enhance possibilities for support by the parents.

3. Parents and teachers will work cooperatively with the school administrative team in developing the best of possible instructional programs for students in the district. Chances of success with respect to curricular changes are greatly enhanced when parents understand and support the change.

IMPROVED CURRICULAR AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Parent-teacher involvement groups can perform a valuable function in supporting the school system in constantly revising, up-dating, and expanding their curricular and extra-curricular activities. Consider the following objectives as some specific ways of attempting to accomplish this objective.

1. Parents and teachers will work together in providing support for expanded curriculum offerings in the school program.

2. Parents and teachers will form curriculum study committees to provide constructive suggestions for on-going curriculum improvement in the school's program.

3. Parents and teachers will sponsor special fund raising events in order to provide financial support to the district in acquiring materials and resources needed for implementing a quality instructional program.

IMPROVED SOCIAL CLIMATE AMONG PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Social interaction among parents and teachers provides an opportunity for developing mutual understanding and social growth so necessary for fostering a positive parent-teacher organization. The following are examples of objectives which are useful for identifying the tasks needed for accomplishing this goal.

1. Parents and teachers will organize various social projects which bring them together in productive social interchange throughout the year.

2. Parents and teachers will assist each other in carrying out special events such as American Education Week, Teacher Appreciation Day, and Parent Thank You Lunches; making the most of opportunities to recognize the importance of each other's strengths.

3. Parents and teachers will work toward developing some community wide social events where the entire community can participate in both formal and informal educational programs. Attention to Senior Citizen groups, open forum sessions focusing on topics of interest to the citizens of the local community can bring schools and communities closer together.

IMPROVING ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

As our society has become more complex it is vital that effective, on-going adult education programs exist in the form of public educational offerings. Parents and teachers should consider the following objectives as modes of implementing adult and continuing education programs in their school districts.

1. Parents and teachers will work together in sponsoring adult enrichment and basic education classes. The school's resources are valuable to adult family members as well as to the young child.

2. Parents and teachers will cooperate with area community colleges in providing adults of all ages and backgrounds with educational and retraining possibilities.

3. Parents and teachers will work together to provide special parent education programs geared toward basic child development skills and knowledges, as a part of this adult education program. When the school and families support and respect each other, trust evolves which allows parents to be receptive of the sincere educator's attempts to be of assistance.

IMPROVEMENT IN PROVIDING AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EDUCATION SETTING

One of the most important goals of any parent-teacher organization must be the continued assurance of an equal educational opportunity for every child in the school district. The following are minimal, initial objectives that should be implemented in an effort to accomplish this goal.

1. Parents and teachers, in cooperation with the school administration, will draft a bill of educational rights for all people in the community. Simply drawing attention to the educational needs of a community and establishing some community-wide goals to be accomplished can do much to raise the educational sights of everyone.

2. Parents and teachers will include in their organizational setting the mechanism for promoting (as far as possible) equal instructional settings in each school in the district. Attention will be focused on teacher assignment, development and availability of materials, and use and care of equipment.

3. Parents and teachers will make every effort to involve members from every facet of the community in their programs and organizational structure. (Citizen Advisory Board and PTO's should be in operation in each school in the district).

Parents and teachers need to have basic goals and specific objectives by which they can operate in order to attain quality educational and social programs in their community. A major weakness in many schools today is the lack of parent-teacher partnerships. Schools are only as effective as the people (parents, children, teachers, administrators, and citizens) who operate them. Parent-teacher organizations can make a tremendous contribution to the school and community by implementing the goals and objectives put forth in this chapter and by expanding these ideas through examination of local problems and needs as they relate to a better future of our children.

Discussion Questions

1. Parents of district 2 in Overhead Falls, Missouri have complained to the school board that no plan exists by which they can be involved in the education of

their children. The Board of Education has asked each school in the district to draw up a set of objectives to resolve this problem. As a member of the staff what would your position be on an objective list for a parent involvement program?

2. Having read this chapter of the book what additional objectives should be developed for parent involvement programs?

Suggested Readings

Ira J. Gordon, *Building Effective Home-School Relationships*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1976.

Mary B. Lane, *Education for Parenting*, Washington, D. C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1975.

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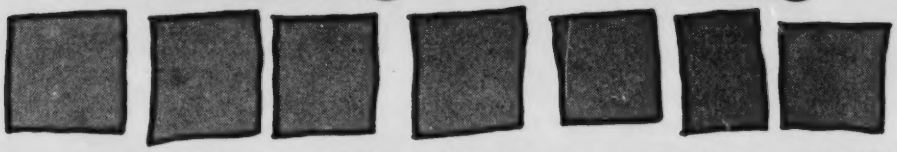
chapter six

a family-school approach to teaching and learning



A basic assumption of the family-school systems approach to early childhood education is that people will work together in planning the educational process so learners will develop the skills, knowledges and attitudes needed for productive living. The process of life is developmental and transactional in substance and structure. Since the family and the school are institutions structured to meet the developmental and learning needs of infants and young children, they should function in a concerted manner. Thus, the family-school approach to early childhood education would begin early and be continued throughout the lives of the children and the adults.

Another assumption underlying a family-school systems approach to early childhood education is that both family and school have a responsibility to provide a logical, humane and competent mode of involving children, parents and teachers in meaningful life experiences. An unfortunate happening in our society today is that many children and adults are experiencing life in a chaotic and non-directed manner. Inherent in a systems approach is the cooperative development of a learning plan of action by families and schools. Such a plan would include goals and objectives that are reflective of the needs of parents, teachers and children as they emerge in the family-school relationship.

A major weakness in our educational system is the lack of family-school-community communications on the purposes and learning modes utilized in home and school environments. This communications gap has occured as a result of the current patterns wherein families and schools operate in isolation. A systems approach to family-school relations is premised on the concept that everyone in the community will be involved in the planning and implementation of a developmentally-based approach to maintaining quality life-support services.

Continuity of life experiences is beneficial to every member of the human

community. A family-school systems approach is further premised upon the idea that the continuity of development can be provided for most effectively when people are working to blend the environments of home and school into reasoned and mutually complementary settings. Families and schools require systematic planning and organization in their respective settings in ways that assure continuity of development.

Parents, teachers, and children are continually in need of renewal; finding new meaning in what they are doing and exploring different ways of accomplishing their goals. A family-school systems approach to early childhood education is based upon the idea that adults and children can find continuous opportunities for self renewal when they are in communication with each other.

BASIC COMPONENTS

Any social system functions most effectively when it is organized in a meaningful way and the people involved utilize it to enhance the human condition. Family-school systems may vary in their structural design and in the procedures used to accomplish a functional home-school relationship. Essential to the workability of any family-school system are, however, at least four basic components. There must be organizational arrangements which include provisions for budgeting, physical space, staffing, and specific plans for action.

Financial support will be necessary to train parents and teachers, acquire needed materials, and to support required staff to coordinate and manage the program. Physical space must be available for parents and teachers to use as a meeting place for conducting individual conferences, group meetings, and other activities vital to developing an effective home-school relationship. If parents, children, and teachers are to relate and respond to each other in an organized manner, specially trained staff will be helpful to coordinate and provide leadership to the program.

A key person in the operations of a family-school systems approach to early childhood education is the staff person who is assigned direct responsibility for overseeing the planning and implementation of the program. This person could be the *home-school coordinator*. This individual would act as the leadership director in bringing about a workable home-school relationship. The home-school coordinator should be skilled in human relations techniques and in management procedures, and knowledgeable about the family and the school as social and educational institutions. This emerging professional role should eventually acquire a distinctive identity.

Realistically, however, it is recognized that not every program will be able to free a staff member for the exclusive role of home-school coordinator. Therefore, the present model is designed so that it can be implemented by a school which can staff this role on at least a limited basis. The assigned coordinator must take

the lead in assuring that some plan of action is developed. Parents, teachers, and children should be involved in the development of such a plan. A family-school systems approach to early childhood education is based upon the idea that planning and continuous improvement are essential to the development of all human beings and their institutions.

Essential to the success of family-school programs is a clearly delineated plan of action on how the family and school are to function. Many parent-teacher organizations have failed to bring about any meaningful home-school partnerships because they lacked a systematic mode of operating. As family-school systems approaches are developed it is essential to involve as many people as possible in the planning stage. Further, participants should later be involved in ongoing training and development sessions in which they define, implement, and improve their plan in a systematic fashion.

An important part of this planning is to conduct a needs assessment. Forms are available for assessing the perceived needs of parents in relation to their contacts with school personnel. Regardless of the type of assessment used, it is vital that home-school leaders acquire information on how parents perceive their needs in relation to the school, the types of goals that parents believe to be the focus of a family-school program, and the extent to which the assessed needs are reflective of a cross-section of the entire community.

The first recommendation is for the responsible staff member to gather comprehensive data on the past performance of the family-school system. For example, the staff person should list each type of involvement procedure that has been utilized in the past. Substantive data should be collected on things such as:

- The actual number of parent-teacher conferences conducted in the past school year.
- The number of parent-teacher meetings held and the topics for each meeting in addition to the number of parents and teachers attending.
- The frequency of newsletter distribution.

The second step in completing the needs assessment is to involve parents and community agencies in a talk session. This session would have three main purposes: (1) To identify the felt needs of the parents and others involved, (2) To establish objectives that parents, teachers, and agencies plan to accomplish during the year, and (3) To identify the communication strategies which would be most effective in accomplishing the stated objectives.

The data collected (in the needs assessment process) should be as comprehensive as possible so that strategies for implementation will focus on existing needs. In addition, evaluation strategies will be effective only when the existing program is clearly defined at the outset.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES

The data gathered during the needs assessment process should be used as the basis for developing a set of usable family-school program objectives. It is most important to involve parents and teachers (and others who will have a role in the implementation stage) in developing these objectives. There are four essential steps in the systematic development of program objectives.

A first step is to organize the identified needs into clusters from which specific objectives can be formulated. For example, there may be a category of needs related to *family assistance* such as medical aid, social services, and child care needs. Another category of needs may relate to home-school communications and could be grouped under the *family-school relations* heading. By categorizing needs which were identified during the needs assessment process, more functional program objectives can be developed.

A second step in the process is to prioritize needs from highly important to less important. This step will require involvement of parents and educators in determining the most urgent needs. A useful way of accomplishing this task would be to make a list of the identified needs and to use the list as the basis for discussion. Emerging from such discussion sessions could be a priority list such as the following:

FAMILY-SCHOOL SYSTEM NEEDS

I. High Priority
   A. Establishment of better home-school communications.
   B. Involvement of community agencies in school programs.
   C. Development of a child care center.
   D. Formation of an after school program.

II. Low Priority
   A. Formation of a summer school program.
   B. Organization of a social calendar of events.
   C. Establishment of a volunteer program.
   D. Acquisition of a bus for parent transportation.

After needs are prioritized, the development of program objectives becomes a process of specifying ways to meet the needs as identified (see Chart A).

A third step in the process of developing objectives is to establish a list of objectives of immediate concern. This listing can be based upon the needs identified as priority concerns of the family-school team. Thus if the need for better home-school communication was a high priority item, an objective might be to establish regular times for parent-teacher conferences. Items identified as important but not urgent could be incorporated into a set of objectives to be used in making long range plans. For example, many parents and teachers may see the need for having a summer school program. Such a need could become the basis

for organizing a plan to eventually have such a program.

A fourth step involves the family-school team in printing and disseminating the agreed upon program objectives. This process can be accomplished by developing a guidebook which explains the focus of the program for the school year. This step could also be accomplished by incorporating the objectives into the school manual or through publication in the local newspaper or a newsletter. The finalized list of program objectives will become the basis for selecting and implementing appropriate strategies to accomplish the objectives.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is the key to the maintenance and functioning of any human system. As home-school coordinators (or their alternatives), parents, teachers, and other community persons become involved in forming a systematic family-school working relationship, they should select appropriate strategies to carry out their functions. An important part of selecting useful strategies involves the matching of program objectives to family-school-community needs, then appropriate techniques must be chosen to accomplish the objectives.

There are many different strategies and techniques which parents and teachers can choose to use in their working relationships. Each strategy has a purpose and can usually be related to meeting specific needs and objectives of the family-school situation. A systematic match between needs and selected strategies is essential for developing an effective home-school program. The following list of needs and appropriate communication strategies exemplifies techniques as they are related to meeting individual family and/or school needs.

CHART A

FAMILY-SCHOOL	STATED OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED COMMUNICATION
problem solving sharing information confidential situation		Individual Parent-Teacher Conference
personal support common concerns parent education problem solving		Group Conferences
relating to family modeling for children personal contacts parent education		Home Visits
relating to school learning together modeling for children parent education		School Visits
information involvement assistance announcements		Newsletters
assessing needs determining interests setting a direction		Inventories and Questionnaires
information communication awareness		Telephoning
parent education citizen involvement awareness		Television
group information parent education citizen awareness		Radio, Newspaper, and Slide Presentation
pupil progress school progress home progress		Anecdotal records, Test data, Program charts, and Work samples

The appropriate match of communication strategies to objectives in implementing a systematic family-school relationship is essential. For example, if one of the program objectives is to bring about community awareness of early childhood education programs an appropriate tool might be television. If the objective is to foster closer working relations among parents and teachers, however, the use of home visits and conferences would be more effective strategies. Each family-school program will be singular since current practices and perceived needs differ based on variables unique to specific programs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED STRATEGIES

In implementing a family-school systems approach to early childhood education it is important to remember that this will be (in most cases) a new experience for the parents, children, teachers, and administrative team. It is of extreme importance that this new experience be a constructive one so that the program can be developed and expanded with each succeeding year. As communication strategies are selected and program activities organized, these must relate to the needs and objectives identified and developed by the parents and community agencies during the planning sessions. It is also extremely important to schedule activities and programs at times and in places convenient for parents and teachers. Questions such as the following should be asked by those involved in implementing family-school projects.

1. Is the program well organized and reflective of the needs parents and teachers identified as high priority concerns?
2. Have the mechanical aspects of the program been attended to by individuals given specific assignments? (It is very discouraging to attend a program where equipment does not function!)
3. Has the program been well advertised? Many people fail to attend programs simply because they are unaware of them.
4. If people are to be involved in some aspect of the program have they been notified and reminded of their assignments?
5. Has a method of implementing the program or activity been established? Is there an agenda or schedule to follow (if appropriate) in conducting the program? Systematically planned activities are more likely to succeed than poorly organized programs.
6. Have the goals that were set been realistic ones? Small increments in expectations are more likely to be met than large ones.

Communication is a key element in preventing and eradicating problems. The development of a check list format for assuring that program details have been attended to is one way of insuring success. Setting a positive climate for human interaction and positive family-school contacts is yet another way of in-

creasing the success level of such projects.

As is the case with any system in which human beings work together, problems do arise and should be dealt with in a logical manner. The following are problems common to the introduction and implementation of home-school programs that involve people in facilitating the development and learning of families and schools:

- In some cases parent and teacher attitudes are not conducive to close working relationships. This may be caused by a lack of training or may result from previous times of isolation from each other.
- Due to the varying work schedules of parents and the very demanding job of teaching it is common for the scheduling of conferences and home visits to become a problem. Thorough planning in advance (in which the needs of parents and teachers are taken into consideration) can help to alleviate this problem.
- When people work together on a continuous basis, communication gaps and interpersonal disputes are a normal part of the process. Training sessions on how to effectively communicate with people can help to minimize this problem.
- As new modes of family-school operations are introduced, problems of coordination, record keeping, and systems management are likely. It takes time to work out an effective system. The more thorough the preplanning and the more cogent the definitions, the fewer the problems when the program is implemented.

Effective implementation of a family-school systems program is dependent upon the behaviors and skills of the program team. Staff members involved in planning and implementing this type of program should be skilled in human relations techniques and proficient in management and administration of programs. Programs which are effectively planned and implemented will become the basis for successful continuation of family-school interaction in future years.

PROPER EVALUATION

A family-school systems approach to early childhood education should include an assessment and improvement component. One of the most difficult tasks confronting parents and teachers who become involved in any family-school program is to assure that the program be continually evaluated and improved. However, systematic approaches to making family-school arrangements effective require that the people involved periodically evaluate the program and (if needed) redesign it.

Questions for possible use in this evaluation process are as follows:

- To what degree were the objectives of the program accomplished? If

certain objectives were not accomplished, why not?

- What were the reactions of parents and teachers to the way the program functioned? Did they find the conferences, group meetings, and other events meaningful and relevant to improving the family-school situation?
- Did the personnel such as the home-school coordinator function effectively? Were the financial resources, physical space, and administrative arrangements satisfactory in terms of achieving the objectives of the program?
- To what degree did the training and development sessions succeed in facilitating parents and teachers in accomplishing their tasks? Were teachers and parents able to acquire an understanding of how the program functioned and were they able to implement needed communications to make the program work?
- What were some of the strengths and weaknesses of the program? What aspects of the program were highly successful? Where could the program be improved? How?

There are many techniques to use in conducting the evaluation. An end of the school year meeting in which parents and teachers assess the program in terms of original objectives, current accomplishments, and requirements for the next school year is one method for evaluating family-school programs. Other approaches include the use of program evaluation sheets, parent-teacher interview sessions, on-going program and activity evaluation statements, informal feedback and product outcomes resulting from activities implemented during the year.

The basic purpose of any evaluation process is to ultimately improve the performance and effectiveness of the system. Those involved in attempting to bring about a workable family-school relationship certainly want some knowledge about the effectiveness of their program. Were the objectives accomplished? Were family-school relationships improved? What specific activities resulted from the program? Were these activities useful in accomplishing program goals? As parent-teacher teams answer these questions they should be able to develop future plans to improve their programs.

An important part of the evaluation process is the internal assessment of how personnel functioned in carrying out their tasks. Did the home-school coordinator indeed provide leadership for developing a viable home-school program? Were classroom teachers responsive to the needs of all families involved in the program? Did parents participate meaningfully in conferences and other school programs? Were citizens active in their support of the program? The answers to these questions can provide all members of the family-school team with ideas on how they can improve their program. The primary function of the evaluation process is to improve the way families and schools function – thus the emphasis must be on how we can improve the human climate for the benefit of children and adults.

A FAMILY-SCHOOL SYSTEMS APPROACH: UTILIZING THE TOTAL TEAM

The parade of social servants that visits the home (especially homes of families with special problems) is almost endless. The waste of energy, time, materials, and human resources is continually evidenced in the delivery of various medical, educational, social and economic services. The practice of utilizing ten or fifteen different agencies (operating in autonomous modes) to meet different developmental needs of children and families must end. The development of every human being is a process in which the biological, social, psychological, and intellectual facets are interdependent.

A family-school systems approach to early childhood education if it is to be an effective mode of assisting schools and families, should incorporate the use of related human service groups in a systematic fashion. The family and the school, when working together, provide an institutional arrangement in which all community agencies can effectively function. This systems model should utilize a multi-services approach through working with all community agencies in an effort to provide quality care for children, parents, and teachers. This might be accomplished through the formation of family-school support teams in which doctors, health care agencies, family service groups, educators and parents function as a team. The systematic implementation of family-school approaches to early childhood education can bring about the kind of relationship among homes, schools, and communities required to make these institutions meaningful mechanisms for social improvement.

Discussion Questions

1. Organize a plan for implementing a parent involvement program. Discuss some of the problems you think may hinder effective implementation of the plan. Offer some suggestions on solving these problems.
2. What role should parents have in organizing and implementing a parent involvement program? How would you facilitate their involvement?

Suggested Readings

Anthony Colleta, *Working Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement*. Humanics Press, Atlanta, 1977.

Ira Gordon and William Breivogel, *Building Effective Home-School Relationships*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

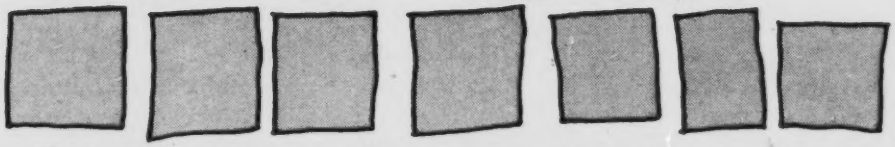
Kenneth Kenniston, *All Our Children*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1977.

Daniel Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty*. New York: The Free Press, 1969.

Kevin J. Swick and Carol F. Hobson, *Working Relationships: Parents and Teachers*. Champaign, Illinois: Stipes Publishing Co., 1979.

appendix

parent involvement: a process approach



Teachers and child care workers are aware of the need for involving parents in the education of young children. Undergraduate courses that focus on child growth and development usually devote chapters to the importance of the parent-infant relationship. This involvement of the parent with the infant extends into the childhood years. If you have had the opportunity to observe or better yet work with schools or day care programs you probably have some idea of the importance of parental involvement in early childhood education programs.

Teachers of many backgrounds have been heard to say: "If only their parents would be supportive of the school!" Likewise, many parents feel unwanted when it comes to participation in educational programs for their children. In talking with a recently divorced parent about her involvement with the school this was the response: "I don't go to the functions anymore. I went once and felt left out – looked at – you know what I mean? I got the feeling I was a bad parent because I was divorced."

Involving parents is more than having an open house at the school. It is a process of involving ourselves as educators and child advocates in opening our minds and learning settings to *all parents*.

OBJECTIVES

1. To define and discuss the various components that combine to make up the parent involvement process.
2. To explain how the parenting process has changed and how the changes affect the parent involvement process.
3. To identify the major objectives of a parent involvement program.

4. To discuss the communications process as it relates to parent involvement and identify various modes of involving parents in the educational process.
5. To plan a program to involve parents who usually avoid the school or early learning center.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: WHAT IS IT?

The term parent involvement means something different to each person, depending upon their point of view. To some educators and child care workers parental involvement means parents doing things for the school such as coordinating a bake sale or handling lunch room supervision. Other people perceive parent involvement to mean that parents become involved in programs where they are educated about certain aspects of child care or about new curriculum ideas being implemented in the school program. Still other educators see 'real' parent involvement to exist when parents are decision making partners in terms of what happens in the learning setting. Each of these parent involvement perspectives has some merit. Yet each lacks something when considering a comprehensive view of parent involvement.

The idea of involving parents in the education of their children must be based on a partnership attitude between parents and teachers. The term parent involvement is misleading in that it implies that parents are not involved and they are the ones to become involved. When the teacher develops a superior attitude toward the parent, a "I want you to . . . " attitude, the results are tragic. Likewise, when parents view teachers in a subservient manner the parent involvement program is meaningless. Any helping relationship must be built upon a mutual trust and respect. Thus a parent-teacher partnership must exist before a parent involvement program can have meaning.

When parents and teachers are together on their thinking they are ready to do things as a team. There are at least three facets of a comprehensive parent-teacher partnership: (1) Parent-Teacher *Education*, (2) Parent-Teacher *Participation*, and (3) Parent-Teacher *Involvement*.

The parent-teacher education facet is the *learning* part of the partnership. It means that parents and teachers involve themselves in becoming knowledgeable about the issues or events they are dealing with.

> "A group of parents who are interested in setting up a child care center are enrolled in a series of early childhood courses in the school's adult education program."
>
> "The staff of the local preschool have been concerned about the lack of home-school communica-

tions in their program and have developed a weekly in-service group to explore ways they can improve the communications between home and school."

"The parents and teachers of the first grade children are concerned about the discipline problems existent in the school. They have set up a series of 'listen and learn' sessions to gain a better understanding of the problem."

Notice that in the above examples parents and teachers are learning; sometimes in separate groups and in other situations together. The teaching-learning situation is growth oriented and considered a mutual concern and common process for parents and teachers. To design educational programs for parents without similar experiences for early childhood educators is not conducive to developing an effective home-school relationship. When teachers and parents are learning, growing, and teaching each other they will be informed participants who base their decisions on rational information.

With the proper approach a constructive parent-teacher involvement effort can be implemented. The *involvement* facet of the parent-teacher partnership can take many different forms. Again it is important that involvement activities be a mutual undertaking by parents and teachers. The involvement aspect of the parent-teacher partnership is the *doing* part of the process. Parents can do many things to make the school a meaningful place for children and teachers. Teachers, within their capacities, can help parents with their home environments. And parents and teachers can do many things together which are beneficial to them and their children.

Example: Mr. Turner enjoys making wooden tables and spends a great deal of time in his wood working shop. He is making many different items for the new kindergarten such as puzzles, blocks, a wood working corner, work tables, outdoor play equipment and wooden counting rods.

Example: Mrs. Fawley teaches fourth graders but as a part of her in-service education experience contract with the parent-teacher-organization she tutors first graders who are having problems with their school work.

Example: Mrs. James is a single parent and is unable to attend the school functions (she works during the day and early evening). However, she is

an excellent seamstress and is making many of the costumes for the school play.

Example: Mr. Jinsen teaches first grade and is very concerned with the problem of child abuse. As a part of his in-service contract with the parent-teacher-organization he spends four evenings a month working at the emergency shelter care center for abused children.

Example: Mrs. Fenwick, Mr. Nolsin and Mrs. Renzalt (parents and teachers) are active members of the Johnson County Parent-Teacher Organization. They have spent the last two years putting together a program for helping parents teach each other about proper child care practices. They are now presenting their program to parent-teacher groups throughout the county.

These examples of parent and teacher involvement activities provide a view of the doing aspect of the home-school relationship. Parents and teachers are, in these examples, helping each other make their lives and thus their children's lives more meaningful. It is worth noting that parent-teacher involvement (the doing) is directly built upon the parent-teacher education (the learning) facet of the program. Doing without preparatory learning and planning is never purposeful or fruitful whether with children, parents or teachers.

Parent-teacher participation is the *decision making* part of the home-school partnership, Unfortunately, too many educators have avoided the use of parents in making decisions with regards to curriculum development, school finances, and other areas of the school setting. As teachers and school administrators we have been eager to involve parents in helping us with clerical tasks. lunchroom supervision duty and field trip management but we have been less than enthusiastic in our attempts to involve parents in decision making roles.

Parents and teachers need to utilize educational opportunities to prepare themselves for cooperative decision making. Professional educators have (or should have) the expertise to coordinate and implement educational programs. Parents have much to contribute to enrich the learning setting. Both parents and teachers need to listen to each other in a responsive manner in making decisions about all aspects of the schooling process. These decisions must be made by educated people; individuals who continuously are searching for constructive ways to educate young children.

Many parents spend time with their children and have excellent ideas on how preschool, kindergarten and primary school programs could be improved. The effective early childhood educator involves parents in deciding how the learning

environment will operate. When parents and teachers cooperate in the decision making process in a meaningful way the resulting program for children is more reflective of the way we want those children to live as children, young people and adults.

Parent involvement is a parent-teacher effort to develop educational, involvement, and participation experiences which are beneficial to themselves and their children educationally and socially.

THE PARENTING PROCESS: IT HAS CHANGED

Parent involvement programs of today and tomorrow must be developed by parents and teachers who understand the changing nature of the parenting process. The family of today is more diverse than the family of past decades. The parenting process today is characterized by the following:

- An increase in one parent families, whether due to divorce, death, or other causes.
- A decrease in the size of families. The family of six or seven children has been replaced by the family of two or three children.
- A continuing increase of divorces and a corresponding increase in one parent families.
- An increase in the diversity of ways in which children are raised such as fathers taking on the child care tasks or grandparents assuming the major role of child care in the family.
- An increase in the number of mothers working, leaving them with fewer opportunities for involvement with their children.
- A disappearance of the extended family, continuing dissolution of the nuclear family and the emergence of a myraid of parenting styles.
- A change in the sex role identities of many parents not fully understood by parents or their children.
- An increase in parental failure to perform the nurturance and child rearing tasks necessary to the positive development of self concepts in young children thus bringing about increased child abuse-neglect situations.

The parenting process as it has changed, has also effected the ways in which families live. The following are examples of family life as it occurs in our society.

> *Example:* Mr. Gordon was recently divorced and was given custody and the responsibility to care for three children. He is a teacher at the Hilton Junior College and has been active in the community for many years. The children (Ann who is

10, Jim who is 8 and Marie who is 7) have good school records but have been affected by the turmoil existent in the home during the events leading up to the divorce. They are now adjusting to the situation and doing adequate work in their respective classroom situations. Mr. Gordon's mother, who is seventy-two, watches the children when he must be absent for work. Mr. Gordon continues to be very interested in school and community events but no longer has the time to do the things he used to be able to do. He makes a comfortable salary and the Gordon family lives in a small town area. Grandmother Gordon is in good health and is thinking of moving in with the Gordon family to help with the house keeping chores.

Example: Ms. Williams is among a growing number of people who are single and adopting children. She has taken on the parenting duties for 3 year old Margaret. Mae, as her friends call her, is a county health nurse. She lives in a small but comfortable apartment and is active in trying to improve the health program in the local schools. She dates different men and has a capable baby sitter to watch Margaret when she is gone. During the day while she is at work young Margaret is attended to in the Country View Day Care. Ms. Williams makes enough money to keep her small apartment functioning smoothly. She is planning to have Margaret's teeth fixed and is also making plans to involve young Margaret in more social experiences. Mae Williams enjoys being a parent and her friends and neighbors marvel at how she has made such a nice life for Margaret.

Example: David and Lisa Monez live in a small city. They are both hard working people who enjoy their two children: William and Robert. Mr. Monez works in a steel factory and when unemployed last year he worked at a supermarket. Mrs. Monez works as a waitress in the Holiday Inn. When her husband was temporarily out of work she also worked the morning shift at the Holiday

Inn as a cleanup person. William who is ten and Robert who is nine attend the public schools and are considered good students. They are active in athletics and music and take care of themselves when their parents are at work. The Monez family lives in a working class neighborhood, are active church members and are interested in school activities but are often unable to attend school functions.

As the examples indicate the parenting process is carried out in many different ways and by varying parenting teams. Thus parent involvement programs need to be developed in such a way that all parents, regardless of their situation, can be a part of the program. As you can see (from the examples and possibly from your own observations) parents today may live in various settings, be the sole parent, live in a two parent working situation, have adopted children or live and work in other situations. This diversity which exists in families needs to be considered when parent involvement programs are planned.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Why do so many parent involvement programs have difficulty in reaching the people we need to help? Why do many parents and teachers become disenchanted with parent involvement programs? The answer to these two questions is that too often such programs are developed without an understanding of what they should accomplish. Often times parent involvement programs are started by people who have a vested interest in some attainable goal which may not be related to the goals of others or to the proper reasons for which parent-teacher partnership should be developed.

A first concern of those who develop parent involvement programs is to assure that the planning committee is composed of people who represent the total setting of the community. The development of parent and teacher confidence in the program can only take place when they see people of varied backgrounds and concerns working together. The attitudes of people who organize parent-teacher programs must be positive and directed toward constructive involvement of as many teachers and parents as possible.

To dramatize the reasons why so many parent involvement programs fail ask yourself how you would feel if placed in the following situations:

- Mrs. Wilson has been called by the teacher to attend a conference about her son, Billy. He has been in trouble all year and he seems to do nothing right at school. This is to be the third conference this year

and at the other two conferences the blame was placed on Billy and his mother. *Would you go to this conference if you were Mrs. Wilson?*

- Blue Hill Kindergarten has four open house programs a year. Mr. and Mrs. Kline went to the first open house and listened to a speaker they could not understand and listened to the PTA officers tell how they had done so much for the school. *Would you go back for another open house program?*
- Mrs. Heltner has supervised the lunchroom for three years. Each year the teachers have promised that they would make sure another adult is there to help her with this job. But each year Mrs. Heltner ends up doing the lunchroom supervision by herself. *If you were Mrs. Heltner would you agree to do it again?*
- The Fairyview Day Care is a publicly sponsored program for children of low income families. They have sent home notes to the parents who have not shown up for the parent programs. All the programs are held in the evening. Mrs. Gozalez received a note. She works nights and doesn't feel she would have anything to contribute to the program. No one at the day care center has ever contacted her except through notes. *How would you feel if you were Mrs. Gozalez?*

In order to avoid situations where parents or teachers feel unwanted, parent involvement programs should be designed to accomplish the following goals:

1. Leadership teams who attempt to develop parent involvement programs should be composed of people who are representative of the entire school-community population.
2. Parent involvement programs should aim to assist children, parents and teachers to improve their self images and abilities to learn and grow together.
3. Programs designed to enhance the home-school relationship should aim to include all parents and teachers in positive experiences with each other and their children.
4. Those leaders who design parent involvement programs should attempt to offer a variety of events and activities at various times so that every parent and teacher can find something they like and can attend.
5. Parent involvement programs should be designed to assist everyone in helping each other make homes, schools and communities places where children and adults can learn and develop in positive ways.
6. Parent involvement programs should attempt to make schools places of equal opportunities for all children.
7. An important part of any parent involvement program is the provision of educational experiences for parents and educators.
8. Those leaders who are given the task of designing parent involvement

programs should make every attempt to involve parents and teachers in the decision making process as well as other important goals.

9. A partnership approach to parent-teacher involvement should be a goal of program leaders.
10. Those who become involved in parent-teacher programs must be constantly reminded that they model behaviors their children develop and use.

Programs designed to improve home-school relationships should reflect the diversity of parent and teacher life styles as well as goals that are descriptive of what we want children to be like as they develop.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Many early childhood teachers and school administrators complain that parents in their program just do not participate in school related activities. Parents voice similar complaints that they are never invited to participate in the school programs. All of this verbal concern by parents and teachers needs to be channeled into constructive involvement situations. As an individual interested in the lives of young children you certainly realize the need for a continuous and positive relationship between the home and the school. There are many techniques for involving parents in early childhood programs but all of these techniques are dependent upon positive parent-teacher communications.

COMMUNICATIONS IS THE KEY!

What happens between parents and teachers (or does not happen) that so often causes parent-teacher relationships to deteriorate or worse dissolve? An examination of some parent-teacher contacts will help us to identify some of the problems.

Telephone Conversation

Mrs. Edwards: "Mrs. Juniper I really don't understand why you are having Bobby color a lot of circles. He already knows his colors."

Ms. Juniper: "Mrs. Edwards I use the district kindergarten guide and that is what I'm supposed to teach. You should talk with the Director of Curriculum. I'm doing my job."

A Conference

Mr. Hall teaches first grade and has his desk organized today for conferences with the parents. He has his desk situated so he is behind it and a chair in front of it for the parents to sit on during the conferences. Mrs. Palmer has just arrived. Each conference is scheduled on a ten minute interval time pattern.

Mr. Hall: Mrs. Palmer just sit right here! Sorry that you are late. As you know we must keep right on time. Now let me tell you that James is not doing well at all. He falls asleep a great deal and never completes his work on time. Now he's not a bad boy he is just not getting on with it. His reading and math scores are poor. He just doesn't seem to be ready for first grade. Or maybe something is wrong at home! (with a glaring look at Mrs. Palmer) Is there something at home, Mrs. Palmer?

Mrs. Palmer: Yes, Jimmy's father and I just recently separated.

Mr. Hall: Oh! I see. Well I suggest you work more with Jimmy, he needs it. Any questions that you have Mrs. Palmer?

Mrs. Palmer: No.

These two parent-teacher communication situations happen more often than any of us would like to think. Not all teachers behave in such a manner. Yet, no teacher should ever behave this way. When a parent such as Mrs. Edwards initiates contact with teachers about some aspect of the curriculum we as educators should welcome interest and concern of the parent. When you conduct a conference be more personable than Mr. Hall was with Mrs. Palmer. Never sit behind a desk but provide an open space where you allow the parent some accessibility to you. There are four basic communication behaviors that neither Ms. Juniper nor Mr. Hall practiced. Those communication behaviors are: *approachability*, *sensitivity*,

flexibility, and *dependability*. Applying these four behaviors to the parent-teacher communications process is the key to making such interchanges successful for parents and teachers.

The *approachable* person is an individual with whom people feel comfortable. Mr. Hall could have been approachable in his behavior by setting the stage so Mrs. Palmer could feel she was with a teacher that cared and was genuine in his concern for her child. For example, Mr. Hall could have done the following:

Mr. Hall:	Hi Mrs. Palmer! How are you today? I really appreciate your taking time to visit with me today. Would you like a cup of coffee?
Mrs. Palmer:	Yes, thank you. The classroom looks so nice. Oh may I have some donuts, too?
Mr. Hall:	Yes, please have one and I want to show you the bulletin board that Jimmy helped to make.
Mrs. Palmer:	The children made this? It is really nice!

Now Mr. Hall has set the stage by allowing Mrs. Palmer to relax, interact and observe the surroundings in which the conference will take place. By having some refreshments available and some work the children have developed on display Mr. Hall exhibits a genuine and positive concern for Jimmy – which should be the focus of the conference.

Sensitivity is necessary for making parent-teacher relationships meaningful. The sensitive person communicates a desire to understand the other person in positive ways in both their verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Mr. Hall, instead of talking at Mrs. Palmer about her home life, could have shown more of a positive concern for her life by approaching the situation in a way such as the following:

Mr. Hall:	Mrs. Palmer I want to tell you how delighted I am to have Jimmy in the classroom. He gets along well with the other children and is a very well behaved child.
Mrs. Palmer:	That is so good to know as I have been concerned about Jimmy. He

hasn't been sleeping well at night. How is he doing in his school work?

Mr. Hall: Well there is nothing to be alarmed about but he is having some difficulty in reading and math but has done very well in social studies. I must say I have been concerned that Jimmy seems very withdrawn lately and doesn't seem to care about school as he did earlier in the year. Is it something I might have done? Sometimes I get very busy Mrs. Palmer and may have done some little thing to hurt Jim.

Mrs. Palmer: No, I don't think it is you at all Mr. Hall. In fact Jimmy really likes you. I should tell you that Mr. Palmer and I recently separated and it has been difficult time for Jimmy.

This approach to the conference by Mr. Hall indicates he is concerned about Jimmy and the family in a constructive fashion. The fact that Mr. Hall points out positive aspects of Jimmy's behavior and is willing to entertain the possibility that he (Mr. Hall) may be a source of the problem indicates to Mrs. Palmer that she is dealing with a sensitive person. The emergent portrayal of the family situation is freely given by Mrs. Palmer because Mr. Hall has *shown* that he truly would like to see Jimmy doing better in his school work.

Flexibility is like a security valve in the communications process. Parents and teachers, like all human beings, want to have options so they can find room to grow, change and direct their motivations toward constructive outcomes. Parents and teachers need to develop flexible attitudes and behaviors as they communicate with each other. Teachers, as skilled child care workers, will have to take the lead in developing this component of the parent-teacher communications process. For example, when Mrs. Edwards called Ms. Juniper about the reason why she was teaching Bob the color scheme she (Ms. Juniper) could have responded as follows:

Ms. Juniper: Mrs. Edwards I'm sorry to hear you're upset. I went through the

colors at the beginning of the year and none of the children knew them. But I must admit the children were still getting used to school and maybe many of them did know their colors. I'm glad you called! Why don't you stop by some afternoon or I'll be happy to visit you as I really do want to make sure I am doing my best for Bob and the rest of the children.

Mrs. Edwards: Why thank you, I certainly will visit and I didn't mean to sound so upset. I was just, well a little concerned about Bob.

The response by Ms. Juniper to Mrs. Edwards inquiry indicated a desire on Ms. Juniper's part to look at the situation, consider alternatives and find a meaningful solution to the problem. She was open to looking at the situation and thus Mrs. Edwards was too.

Dependability is the bridge between parents and teachers as they develop long term, trusting relationships. Teachers who develop an image in the community that they can be counted on usually have productive relationships with parents. Mr. Welton who has taught for eight years in Ridgeville Community Schools is such a teacher. Recently one of the children's fathers called Mr. Welton and expressed concern that his son in the seventh grade was behaving funny, like he was on a sedative or something. Would Mr. Welton keep an eye on his son?

Mr. Welton: Sure Mr. Ralston. It may be that your son is just going through one of the valleys of pre-adolescence but I'll keep an eye on the situation. I'll get back in touch with you!

Mr. Welton followed through on his promise and a week or so later called Mr. Ralston to tell him there was no problem. "Ed seems to be fine and I believe he'll snap into things again before long."

Mr. Welton has done this type of thing for parents and children over the years. He has been active in starting youth programs, served as a member of the child abuse council and also has been active in helping delinquent children with

their problems. He has been a steady, approachable and dependable person and the parents trust his word.

In all aspects of parent involvement communication is the key to bringing about a positive home-school relationship. As you examine the various methods for involving parents in the educational process keep in mind that communications is the key to making them work. Sensitive, flexible, approachable and dependable teachers can utilize any of the parent involvement techniques because they are open to parents, desire their involvement and want to work with the parents to improve the home-school settings.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES.

There are many techniques you can use to develop parental involvement in your school. The different techniques can be used to meet various needs of parents, children and teachers. Before deciding which technique to use you should develop an understanding of the children in your classroom and an awareness of their family situation. Many parents are at work or for other legitimate reasons are unable to attend parent involvement sessions. As you design various activities and functions consider the following examples of parent involvement techniques as means to achieve a full and meaningful parent-teacher partnership.

TECHNIQUE ONE: Mrs. Joseph is attempting to get more fathers involved in school and home activities with their children. This year she is having the kindergarten children plan a picnic lunch for their fathers. 18 of the 25 fathers have agreed to come to the lunch hour picnic. Three of the children have no father in the home and are bringing a brother or uncle to the picnic. Mrs. Joseph is also planning a father-child talent show. These informal and flexibly scheduled events can be used in other ways too. Family share days have proven successful for Mrs. Joseph. Each child brings something from home to share with the other children.

TECHNIQUE TWO: Miss Glehalt is director of a Child Development Center which provides a quality program for 3, 4, and 5 year old children. Each year she has the teachers schedule at least five conferences with each parent. At these conferences the teacher and the parent discuss the progress of the child in terms of learning and in terms of health and social development. Conferences are scheduled around the parents work and home schedule. When a teacher needs to conference a rotating teacher or Miss Glehalt take over the classroom. For those parents who find it impossible to come to the Child Development Center phone

conferences or, where appropriate, home visits are used to maintain home-school communications.

TECHNIQUE THREE: Mr. Windet is principal of the Fort Beet Early Learning Center. The center is a public school for kindergarten-primary grade children and their families. Mr. Windet has formed a parent-teacher-citizen advisory council. Members of the committee were selected by Mr. Windet to represent a cross section of the community. He eventually would like to make the advisory council elective positions. The meetings are held, on a rotating basis, in the homes of the committee members (including Mr. Windet's home). Once a year this committee holds an open hearing at the school so all interested persons can participate in the decisions that are made with regards to the education of their children. The committee members also appoint a member to represent them at the district wide school board meetings. This advisory council has already taken actions to clean up the school playground, acquire needed instructional materials for the teachers and acquire a full time clerical worker to help the teachers with the preparation of classroom teaching materials.

TECHNIQUE FOUR: Mr. Snipes is a coordinator of the Richview City Kindergarten Program. He and several teachers have observed a dramatic increase in child abuse-neglect cases in the community. Mr. Snipes, working cooperatively with the county family services department and an early childhood education department of a nearby university, has developed a parent education program on appropriate child care practices. This educational program is to be on video-tapes so that it can be used throughout the city and at flexible times or by parents on an individual basis. In conjunction with the parent education program Mr. Snipes convinced the city council to budget money to pay high school students to help parents with home duties when the need so existed. As Mr. Snipes says: "The Program will educate as well as assist parents with making life better for their children as well as themselves and involve young children in a meaningful experience."

TECHNIQUE FIVE: Mrs. Fortney teaches first grade at William Smith School. Many of her parents are busy people and the school budget restricts her desire to hold conferences with the parents. Yet, she has developed a classroom newsletter that is printed and distributed to parents twice a month. The newsletter contains in-

formation on projects the children have done as well as events that are being planned for the parents. It is a brief but delightful newsletter that always has something special about some child or parent on the front page. Mrs. Fortney is proud of the newsletter as it has prompted much interest among the children and parents.

TECHNIQUE SIX: Dr. Milton Planjet is director of the Early Childhood Program for Salenta City Schools. As the school district is located in a large urban area he utilizes various electronic devices to reach parents and citizens. In two schools Dr. Planjet is experimenting with a call-in-telephone recorded message center. Each day a message is recorded in which the events and activities the children will be doing that day are explained. Parents can call anytime of the day to hear the message and thus find out what their children did that day as well as acquire some ideas on how they can follow up with home activities. Dr. Planjet is also utilizing a local television station to highlite various activities that are taking place in the early childhood program of the district. He is planning some televised parent education programs dealing with child care, home learning practices and parental involvement opportunities within the local district.

TECHNIQUE SEVEN: Mrs. Burton teaches kindergarten in Ranchview Schools. Many of the children live in homes where few reading materials are available. Thus many of the children have difficulty learning to read. Mrs. Burton has developed a simple booklet that gives parents some ideas on how to help their children with handling books, games and other reading materials. Each year she invites the parents to school and holds some reading help sessions and also utilizes these sessions to get to know the parents. In conjunction with the help sessions Mrs. Burton has organized a book lending library. The library contains materials children and parents can borrow for use at home. Although only in use for one year many children and parents have used the library. Mrs. Burton has also worked with the county library to offer a 'story hour for children' program. The school district provides transportation for parents who need it to get to the story hour time.

TECHNIQUE EIGHT: Dr. James Watoon is Superintendent of Rutland County Schools. In an attempt to reach parents of preschool age children Dr. Watoon has developed a home visitation

program. In cooperation with the county library he has developed a home visitation program. A trained home visitor is a part of the mobile library van staff. This library staff visits each part of the county once a month. They take books and materials to people in rural areas of the county. By going with the library staff the home visitor can visit homes and talk with mothers and fathers of the children throughout the county. The program has been very successful thus far as many parents are following up the visits with inquiries they never knew about. Dr. Watoon is now attempting to get the county health offices to send a nurse along on the mobile van visits. As Dr. Watoon says, A healthy and literate home environment will make school more meaningful to young children."

When you select and utilize specific techniques for involving parents in the educational process keep in mind that communications is needed to make them work.

It is also important to remember that parent-teacher partnerships muat be based on a concept of teaming. Each of us can learn from others. As you learn from fellow teachers and parents you will find your teaching to become more meaningful. As you design and use various parent involvement techniques ask yourself the following questions to see if the activity is reflective of what you want to accomplish.

1. Have I involved the parents in planning the activity?
2. Is the program or activity well organized, published and planned?
3. Is the event offered at a time and place convenient to parents to attend?
4. If you were (or are) a parent would you think the planned activity worth the time to attend?
5. Have appropriate follow-up procedures been planned to carry on the functions of the program?

As you become involved in teaching in early childhood programs you will experience various types of parent involvement activities. If you approach parents as partners and maintain constructive communications in all aspects of your early childhood program and they will support your efforts in and out of the classroom.

PLANNING A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Many parent involvement programs are designed by people with good intentions yet fail to materialize because they lack the substance to meet the needs of all parents. A major objective of any parent involvement program should

be to reach all parents and teachers involved in the home-school arrangement. Programs vary in style and content but do have a common goal of enhancing the relationship among parents and teachers. Some programs are designed and implemented at the district level. Others are organized at the local level and some teachers develop a program to meet the needs of the children and parents within their classroom.

A problem that often exists within all types of parent involvement programs is the non-participation of parents who feel alienated from the school environment. This problem should be the focus of your initial planning. Why do many parents refuse to participate? The answers are many but all of them are related to how the program is planned and presented to the parents.

ESTABLISHING A PURPOSE FOR THE PROGRAM.

Although there are many sensible program goals such as the enhancement of the parent-teacher relationship and the improvement of home and school learning environments each parent involvement effort should begin with the development of the purpose of the endeavor. You as the teacher have one idea (albeit important) of what the program should be like. You must have the imput from parents (as many parents as possible in terms of how they see the orientation of the program developing). A truly cooperative effort should bring about a parent-teacher partnership in which the purpose reflects the needs of home and school. As a part of the planning process the following are necessary steps you should take to assure the development of meaningful reasons for having a program.

1. Acquaint yourself with the families who will be involved in the program. What types of families make up the community? What are their needs?
2. Assess what parents think of the schools by taking an inventory of how they see education in the community. What would they like to see the parent involvement program accomplish? Are they willing to participate in an active way in making the program work?
3. Examine the readiness of the school staff and other personnel to deal with a parent involvement program. What is the current attitude of professionals toward parents in the school? What type of activities need to be conducted to prepare people for meaningful involvement with parents.
4. Organize a parent advisory team to help you plan the basis for developing a program that will address the needs of parents and teachers as they are viewed by a representative sample of people. The parent advisory team should have members representing all facets of the community.
5. Utilizing the ideas of parents and teachers formulate plans to organize a program of activities to begin your parent involvement effort. This initial effort should focus on those projects that can be implemented within the limits of available resources.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE INITIAL PROGRAM.

The situation in which many parent-teacher groups find themselves is that they know what they want to accomplish but are unsure of how to go about it. Some groups attempt to do it all at once and usually disband in turmoil. In other cases the plans of the parent-teacher-organization are never started because no one has the time or because of a "we tried that ten years ago" attitude. The most effective approach is to select one or two priority goals of the program and design activities that will help accomplish those goals. The following is a rather informal but most appropriate example of how one parent-teacher group planned and implemented their program.

THE RIDGEVILLE PARENT-TEACHER TEAM

Mrs. Regina Thompson teaches second grade at Ridgeville Elementary School. Last year she held a few parent evenings in her classroom and found them to be quite helpful to her and the parents. Toward the end of the school year she surveyed the parents of children in the school and found they had some concerns about the school and were quite interested in getting involved in a parent-teacher group. She talked with the building principal and he was open to her discussing the idea with the staff at their next meeting. Mrs. Thompson found that there were three other teachers who were interested enough to sign up for duty to help organize the project.

In the fall of the following school year Mrs. Thompson, three other teachers and seven parents (selected for their interest and as they represented various parts of the community) organized themselves into the Ridgeville Parent-Teacher Planning Team. This planning team discussed the needs of parents and teachers in the Ridgeville Elementary School District. The needs were many and the discussions produced much needed thought about how a parent-teacher group could help both parents and teachers.

As a result of the discussion sessions the planning team decided upon two major goals for accomplishing during the school year: (1) the physical improvement of the Ridgeville Elementary School and (2) the development of a community wide immunization program campaign to assure that infants and young children were being properly immunized against dangerous childhood diseases.

Since the parent members of the planning team were from all facets of the community, they organized a "visit YOUR school" week in the community. Parents and citizens, via radio, television and newspaper advertisements, were requested to visit and see the school and to offer suggestions on how the school could be improved.

Mrs. Thompson and three members of the planning team organized a meeting with officials of the county health department. The meeting was very useful as the health department staff was also quite concerned about the problem of

immunizing infants and young children against serious and sometimes life destroying diseases. The director of the county health board confirmed that many children were not being immunized. Mrs. Thompson, the three planning team members and three county health nurses formulated a school-community plan to encourage parents to make sure their children were immunized.

These two projects (school improvement and the immunization program) were the substance of the Ridgeville Parent Involvement Program for the school year. The planning team decided to conduct and end of the year assessment to see how these two projects had proceeded. In addition they hoped that as a result of these activities the membership would increase and active participation in the program would be broadened to include more parents and teachers in the community.

EVALUATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

An unfortunate happening that negatively affects parent involvement programs is that the same people show up each year with the same program plan as was used in the previous year. Just as teachers need to improve their instructional plans the people who plan parent involvement programs must continuously assess the needs of parents and teachers and incorporate their findings into future program plans. An effective way to conduct this evaluation is to ask questions such as the following.

1. Were the main objectives of the proposed parent involvement program for this school year achieved? If so, how were they achieved? If not why were they not achieved?
2. Were parents from all facets of the community involved in the parent involvement activities during the school year? If not, why was this the case?
3. How did people react to the programs and activities provided during the year? Did formal or informal evaluations indicate parents and teachers were pleased with the programs? If not, did they specify how the programs could be improved?
4. Were the responsibilities for implementing the program shared by as many parents and teachers as possible or did just a few people have to do the work?
5. During the year were parents and teachers encouraged to identify areas of need that future programs could be developed around?

Utilizing the questioning process the parent-teacher-leadership team can generate ideas on how well the program succeeded, where it could have been improved and what directions might be considered when developing programs for future years. No parent involvement is perfect. By utilizing continuous evaluation procedures, however, those people who plan the programs can assure that every effort is being made to have relevant programs.

EXERCISES

Instructions: The following section of this text contains a series of exercises for you to complete. Section One contains objective type test statements, Section Two contains individual projects you can do to show how you would apply the information in this text to real life situations and Section Three includes some discussion items you can utilize in your classroom seminars.

Section One. Underline the T (true) or F (false) in front of each statement according to whether you believe the statement to be true or false.

1. T. F. Parent involvement is necessary in education because most parents lack knowledge about their children.
2. T. F. A truly meaningful parent involvement program utilizes parents to help with the clerical tasks but allows the decision making process to remain in the hands of the professionals.
3. T. F. One indicator of the changing nature of the parenting process is the recent rise in the divorce rate in the United States.
4. T. F. The changing roles that mothers and fathers are performing today does affect the parent involvement process as it is conducted in schools.
5. T. F. The main reason many parent involvement programs falter is that parents of young children are not interested in becoming involved in evening activities at the school.
6. T. F. Before any meaningful parent involvement program can be undertaken a parent-teacher partnership must exist.
7. T. F. The parent-teacher education component of parent-teacher programs is the doing part of the process.
8. T. F. The parent-teacher participation process means that parents and teachers make decisions together in a cooperative manner.
9. T. F. Parent involvement programs should be planned by those parents and teachers who are highly educated.
10. T. F. Parent involvement programs should have the effect of improving the self concepts of teachers, parents and children.
11. T. F. No matter what techniques are used in parent involvement programs the key to success is the communications process as enacted by parents and teachers.
12. T. F. When parents attempt to offer their ideas on the curriculum we use in our classrooms we should remind them that we are the specialists on that subject.

13. T. F. When communicating with parents about problems their children are having at school make it clear that you expect them to do their part in clearing up the situation.
14. T. F. Teachers who spend time listening to the personal situations of the parents are likely to have good communications with them on related issues.
15. T. F. Informal parent involvement activities such as holding noon hour picnics for the fathers should be avoided as they disrupt family life.
16. T. F. A constructive parent involvement practice is to schedule parent-teacher conferences at times convenient to the parents.
17. T. F. When the school district budget does not allocate funds for parent-teacher conferences there is little the teacher can do to have a program for the parents.
18. T. F. An excellent parent involvement technique is to share in the resources of other community agencies in providing families with services such as library story hours and county health programs.
19. T. F. It is important for parent-teacher programs to be based upon the concept of teaming.
20. T. F. Although evaluation is an important part of the teaching process it is not a major part of conducting effective parent involvement programs.
21. T. F. A major problem that often confronts those people who plan parent involvement programs is that some parents feel uncomfortable and unwanted with regards to the school setting.
22. T. F. Teachers who attempt to gain input from parents about the nature of the parent involvement program will be disappointed because most parents are more concerned about the academic program the teacher is providing their children.
23. T. F. Parent-Teacher Advisory Teams should be composed of parents and teachers of all backgrounds and beliefs.
24. T. F. Parent involvement programs should aim to limit their yearly goals to those projects that can be accomplished within the limits and resources available.
25. T. F. The evaluation of parent involvement programs can be effectively handled every three years by a parent-teacher team.

ANSWER KEY:

1. =F, 2. =F, 3. =T, 4. =T, t. =F, 6. =T, 7. =F, 8. =T, 9. =F, 10. =T, 11. =T, 12. =F, 13. =F, 14. =T, 15. =F, 16. =T, 17. =F, 18. =T, 19. =T, 20. =F, 21. =T, 22. =F, 23. =T, 24. =T, 25. =F.

Section Two. (Individual Projects)

1. Interview several different people (including parents, teachers, children and citizens) about what they think a parent involvement program should attempt to accomplish. In a short essay type paper summarize how these different people perceived the functions of a parent involvement program.
2. If at all possible (and where appropriate) sit in on a parent-teacher conference. After the conference talk with the parent and the teacher about different aspects of the conference. How did the teacher plan for the conference? How did the parent feel about the conference? If you had conducted the conference how would you have behaved? Now outline a basic plan you would use in conducting a parent-teacher conference.
3. Develop some parent involvement program activities that you think would be appealing to parents and teachers who usually do not participate in such programs. As you design the activities ask several parents and teachers if they would find the program activities to be useful enough to take time out of their schedules to attend them.
4. Organize a hypothetical parent-teacher communications situation and act it out with another student in the class or with a fellow teacher in the building.
5. Design a comprehensive parent-teacher involvement program in which you explain how the goals, procedures, activities and follow-up work will be handled.

Section Three. (Seminar Discussion Probes)

1. The following passage describes the way in which one parent-teacher group formulated their program goals:

   Mr. Bensin, the school principal, is in charge of getting the Rentall Early Childhood Parent Involvement Program started each year. He has asked three parents and two teachers to meet with him to outline the program for the current school year. At the meeting Mr. Bensin presents an outline of what he thinks the program should be like. He prefaces his remarks with the message that his program has always worked with the parents who really care. The parents and teachers at the meeting nod their heads in agreement with Mr. Bensins ideas and the meeting is adjourned.

   a. Why is Mr. Bensin's method of establishing the goals of the program wrong?
   b. How should Mr. Bensin have handled the task of organizing a workable set of goals for the parent involvement program?

2. A key issue in many schools today deals with what should be emphasized in the program of studies provided young children. Many parents are demanding a back to the basics curriculum for their children. Many parents in Allendo County Schools have taken just such a stand. How should the demands of parents for a back to the basics curriculum be handled? Why must the parents *demand* a change in the curriculum? Do you think this school district has involved the parents in a continuous examination of the curriculum? What should be the parents role in curriculum development?
3. What are some of the things we should do as educators to make the school or early learning center a place where *everyone* in the community can learn and grow as productive human beings?
4. The parents and teachers of Illinois District 4000 have been involved in a constant turmoil over the goals of the school! You as students and teachers involved in early childhood education have been asked to act as in-service educators to help these parents and teachers improve their communication skills.
   a. What approach would you take in terms of involving the parents and teachers in some communications learning situations?
   b. What communications behaviors would you emphasize in your in-service education program?
   c. Why do so many parent-teacher communications situations culminate in conflict? How could these situations be solved?
5. Why is it important to evaluate the outcomes of parent-teacher involvement programs? What are some constructive modes of conducting such an evaluation program?

Suggested Readings

Anthony J. Colleta, *Working Together: A Guide To Parent Involvement.* (Atlanta, Georgia: Humanics Press, 1977), pp. 7-47.

Ira Gordon and William Breivogel, *Building Effective Home-School Relationships.* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976), pp. 4-18.

John W. Holloman, "Discontinuous Mothering – Expanding the Alternatives," in Joe Frost, Ed., *Understanding and Nurturing Infant Development.* (Washington, D. C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1976), pp. 37-46.

Alice S. Honig, *Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education.* (Washington, D. C.: National Association For the Education of Young Children, 1975), pp. 7-19.

James A. Levine, *Who Will Raise The Children? New Options for Fathers and Mothers.* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1976), pp. 35-45.

Patricia Markhun, Ed., *Parenting.* (Washington, D. C.: Association For Childhood Educational International, 1973), pp. 2-9.

Report of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, *The Mental Health of Children: Services, Research and Manpower.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 6-24.

Report To The President: White House Conference on Children. (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 5.

Anthony J. Coletta, Ph.D.

Working Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement will build more cooperative home/school relationships. Parent involvement can facilitate dramatic results in child development. When schools and parents cooperate, self concepts improve, childrens motivation accelerates, and achievement is heightened. The activities in this manual promote trust between home and school by creating a partnership based on clear communication. This practical handbook includes: plans for parent participation in the classroom, alternative approaches to teaching parenting skills, creating home based activities, supplements to parent programs, helpful child development guides and checklists, and many other constructive applications.

No. 106-80 $9.95 189 pp.; 1976

Susan Brown and Pat Kornhauser

Working Parents: How To Be Happy With Your Children is designed to make a positive impact on the home and family life of working parents. This invaluable book presents dozens of easy and effective techniques which promote constructive and enjoyable parent/child interaction without disrupting the families daily routines. *Working Parents* can help any parent explore alternatives to day care, create a "child comfortable" home, consider some of the latest "parenting" techniques and establish learning and activity centers in their own homes. In addition to innovative techniques which encourage parent involvement, many "age flexible" independent play activities for children are suggested. These activities will help parents learn to create situations conducive to their childrens own learning and growth. *Working Parents* is recommended reading for all parents who work, and want to improve the quality of time they spend with their children.

No. 107-80 $7.00 84 pp.; 1977

Mary Tom Riley, Ed.D.

Laton: The Parent Book, presents an innovative training plan for parents of handicapped children and concisely reviews the collective needs of handicapped children and their families. This easily readable publication is one of only a few written materials available, designed to acquaint parents of handicapped children with the resources, facilities, educational opportunities and diagnostic processes available to help them raise their children. It also provides opportunities for interested parents to become leaders of training activities. Through group meetings, *Laton* encourages parents to become involved, interact and acquire knowledge individually and in groups.

No. 412S-80 $12.95 150 pp.; 1977

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